

**ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA
(A STUDY IN ADMINISTRATIVE SOCIOLOGY)**

Administration and Social Development in Kerala

(A Study in Administrative Sociology)

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FOREWORD

The relation between society and administration is an interesting area of study for society moulds administration according to its needs and administration makes efforts to satisfy the needs of society. This study, as mentioned by its author, is an investigative venture into the realm of relations between the active social forces and administration in the state of Kerala.

In recent times, socio-political environment has become an essential part of course designs for civil service training and there has been increasing demand for more literature on the topic for training purposes.

I do hope that this study which reveals the socio-administrative behaviour through historical perspective, will be of use for training purposes as also for students of social sciences.



G.C.L. JONEJA
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PREFACE

Kerala which lies in the south-western part of India is a land of several contradictions. It is exhilaratingly beautiful but like the rest of the country, is extremely caste-ridden. It is a scenic paradise but its richest natural wealth is increasingly squandered away for immediate gains. Its people have a natural inclination to adore outsiders but an inherent penchant to disparage and ignore their own geniuses.

Kerala has the highest literacy in the country but in spite of the rapid proliferation of schools and colleges, not the highest education. Between the existing level of education and the attained point of social enlightenment, there is an obvious disequilibrium which induces the people to sacrifice their common interests for their individual selfish ends and group aggrandisement.

There is a scramble for land grab for furthering community ends at the total betrayal of ecological factors indispensable for the survival of the state. The measure of efficiency is not excellence of performance, and the biggest intellectual pauper will be hailed as a phenomenon of fulfilment if he has the complexion which a caste or community adept in propaganda seeks for.

Education is hardly a sustained endeavour for imbibing knowledge and the use of that knowledge for common social good but a struggle to flaunt a label often through short-cuts to get access to the employment market. Ostensibly, therefore, yearning for erudition and fervour for specialisation have reached a point of desiccation, universities have become centres of unprincipled political patronage, and mesmerising mediocrity masquerades as talent in government offices. Innovation is discouraged, training is resisted and unimaginative and blind imitations of administrative reforms carried out in the neighbouring Tamil Nadu, have assumed a ritualistic sanctity. In a state where political capability is exhausted for

forging communal strategies and coalition manoeuvres, administrative reforms will be a leisurely bureaucratic recreation.

The traditional attitude of the bureaucracy is largely formed by the psyche of the social hierarchy but its modern appearance owes overwhelmingly to the cosmetic make-up of the British to fit in with the concept of public service. It assumes that by virtue of its position, it has epistemological supremacy just as birth and not aptitude, learning, training, piety and ordination that paves way for sacerdotal ascendancy. The new tasks and challenges of mass democracy and development and the pressures and compulsions of the rapidly changing national and international situations to a great extent expose its shortcomings, especially its deficiencies in terms of knowledge and skills and serve a warning that it cannot stand any more by its untenable and absurd rebuttal that power is knowledge.

In Kerala the hiatus between its assumptions and acquisition of knowledge has widened on account of the intellectual limitations of politics and the absence of searching academic penetrations into the frontiers of the state administration. In spite of all Kerala's prevailing ills, its social rationality obtained from its Buddhistic past reasserts in the administrative sphere to create a consciousness that the possession of a diploma or successful performance in a competitive examination at the time of entrance to the service cannot by itself sustain the administrative capabilities which as a rule, for their retention and enhancement require intellectual reorientation through a learning process periodically re-examined and appropriately reorganised.

All contradictions and shortcomings or foibles observed in terms of Kerala may be found equally or in their more intense form with other regions of the country. Yet Kerala had certain unique attainments and attributes which constitute the inner-most psyche not easily disturbed or upset by the occasional cross-currents of socio-political turbulence or turmoil at the surface.

It is this innermost psyche that prompts the Keralites to finally accept simplicity, tolerance and equality as inexorable values of human life which they may for a time deride but

cannot destroy. The transcendent values imbibed first by Kerala are the values of Buddhism and they are so deeply rooted in the social mind of the state that as Buddhism declined as a comprehensive way of life, its place was taken by Islam and Christianity, two egalitarian creeds, and Brahminism strove to retain the same values in its signs, symbols, idealisations and personifications.

Kerala normally resents vulgar display of wealth in any form, ostentatious living, conspicuous consumption and accumulation of privileges by ministers. Its monarchical rulers, some of whom no doubt were despotic, themselves practised simplicity as a mark of quality and they were hailed for their abjuration of pomp even on ceremonial occasions.

There is a great amount of informality in the administration and between the administration and its clientele, and people do not reserve their recognition and regard for a public servant who is not corrupt and who stands not for sectional but for general welfare. Within the administration, inter-personal relationship can assume a new pattern defeating the influence of traditional social norms. Until the close of the fifties, Kerala's administrative expenditure has been the lowest in India and economy was the watchword for the spending departments.

Kerala has a fairly representative bureaucracy which brings about a social balance necessary for the working of democracy and tends to rectify the social bias that leads to discrimination. Kerala has its share of communalism but it is largely confined to each community and does not assume an alarming proportion to disturb social tranquillity. In other words, it is more group-centred than individual centred. The communities in Kerala except for some concentrations are intermingled and scattered all over the state in their distribution which by its built-in defence mechanism neutralises the possibility of group conflicts. Individuals transcend communal barriers to establish lasting personal friendships which dilute to a large extent group-centred communalism.

Likewise, reason has its major role in making a clash between two individuals belonging to two different social groups, purely their personal business. Group sympathy in an individual cause hardly leads to group antagonism or bigotry. Im-

partiality practised by the administration in setting the law into motion in a situation of tension or tussle involving individuals is a major complementary factor in normalising it for the maintenance of social peace and harmony.

In Kerala administration has been a regularising agency for social reforms. In fact, many changes in society which the administration broadly opposed in the beginning, have been carried out by it faithfully. The social conviction forged well in advance by active social agents, prepared the ground even, for the implementation of changes by the administration.

Schools and colleges played a significant part in re-establishing a great measure of equality in Kerala. Even before the arrival of the British, a large number of native schools were run by the leading communities to keep their members literate. Native schools of the Ezhavas and the Nairs not only imparted knowledge of the three Rs, but also of Sanskrit and Tamil which in fact was considered an essential 'foreign' tongue. Admission to the schools managed by the government, was initially restricted to the caste-Hindus but on account of the persistent social demands, not only they were made cosmopolitan but some of the government inspecting officials mostly belonging to the Hindu aristocracy took prompt steps to protect the interest of the students of weaker sections who had been denied justice in some Christian schools.

The government educational department has laid down standards and rules for the privately owned schools and colleges and emerged in the context as the adjudicator of their interests and the arbitrator in their disputes. All the four leading communities in Kerala, the Nairs, the Ezhavas, the Muslims and the Christians own and manage educational institutions and their interests in the educational field cannot be overlooked by the government of any political party.

The first communist ministry of E.M.S. Namboodiripad was got dismissed by the Congress only by combining the agitational forces of the Nairs and the Christians against a moderately progressive reform aimed at improving the lot of the teachers of the private schools, initiated by it. The government could carry out a modest land reform because the four major communities have their own poor sections in different proportions to benefit by it and they were in general,

sympathetic to the landless who toiled for them selflessly for generations.'

The study is an effort to examine the inter-relations of society and administration and correlate them wherever necessary. It may be considered a small attempt to enter the new field of administrative sociology. For long, writers on administrative themes borrowed terms and techniques from American text books and widely used them for dealing with aspects of Indian administration quite detached from society. The intellectual hypocrisy prevailing in India, always excluded society from analysis and as a result, many political, economic and administrative studies based on western concepts have proved to be unrealistic and irrelevant to their goals.

Administration is the instrumentality that applies social correctives, settles social anomalies and regularises social changes. Society supplies the requisite resources to the administration to keep it active and to be effective in achieving its social goals.

This study impliedly seeks to prove that administrative behaviour is largely determined by social developments and the characteristics of administration, by its ecological settings. As social environment is in a constant process of change, the administrative organisation should progressively adapt itself to the continuing environmental change for its suitability and viability. Resistance to change on the part of the administration against the ecological compulsions, works up social hostility against it and considerably diminishes its performance efficiency for public satisfaction.

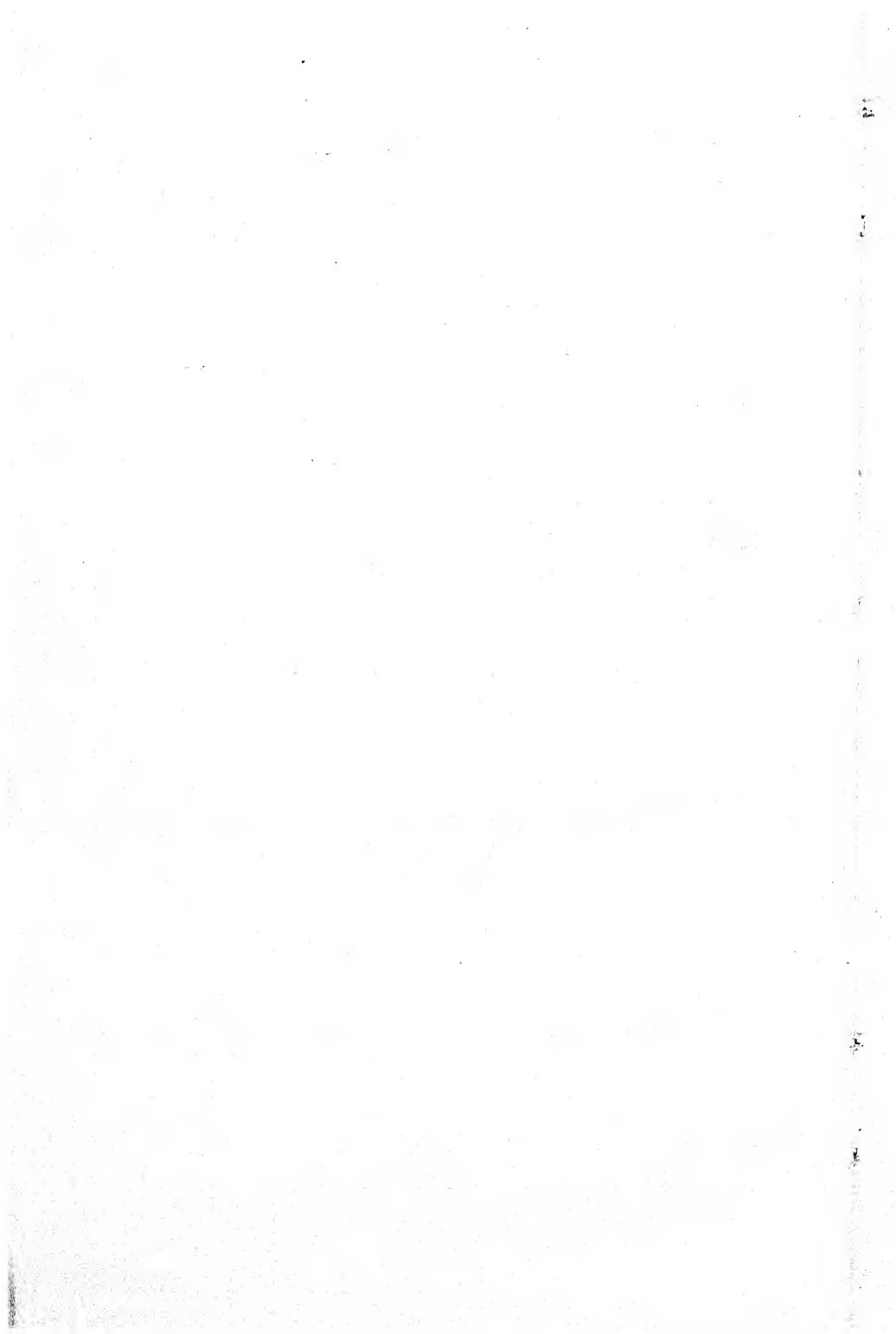
Every administration should be responsive in order to be representative. In Kerala enlightening social ideas put pressure on the administration to carry out major social reforms and endowed it with a new vista of right and wrong and justice and injustice that enabled the emergence of a representative system. While Islam and Christianity have introduced a means to achieve a measure of social freedom and equality, spiritualisation of social equality and freedom for the highest and all round development of the individual by Sree Narayana and their poetical idealisation by Kumaran Asan have made the greatest impact on the administration of Kerala.

In no other part of India, social awareness and demands, and administrative denials and responses are so manifest to find their historical importance, as in the small state of Kerala as the study reveals.

S.N. SADASIVAN

ABBREVIATIONS

BDO	Block Development Officer
DDC	District Development Council
FACT	Fertilizers and Chemicals (Travancore) Limited
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
ICS	Indian Civil Service
INC	Indian National Congress
MILMA	Milk Marketing Board
PSC	Public Service Commission
RDO	Revenue Divisional Officer
TCS	Travancore Civil Service



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STATE AND SOCIETY

Kerala which lies in the south-western part of India is a picturesque land of idyllic grandeur. Hemmed between the Sahya mountain ranges canopied by dense, verdant forests in the east and the hailing waves of the azure, hyacinthine Arabian sea in the west, Kerala presents a changing panorama of nature's gorgeousness.

A littoral state with a coast line of 360 miles (580 kms.) Kerala today extends from Kasargod in the north to Neyyattinkara in the south. Kerala of the yore as conceived in epics and ancient works, had Gokarna near Goa as its northern boundary limit and Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari) as its southern most point but it never did remain united as a single political entity except under the Chera rule between 800 AD and 1000 AD when large part of it was brought under a central administration. A version of history that there was a second Chera empire in Kerala is tendentious, false and baseless in the light of the massive archaeological, sociological, and historical evidence now available. After the collapse of the Chera empire, Kerala was divided into a number of petty principalities or large estates by local military leaders some of whom for fame and legitimacy claimed themselves to be the descendants of the Cheras.

Through a series of vicissitudes between the 14th century and the 18th Kerala was reconstituted into three separate territorial units—Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. In 1792 by the treaties of Seringapatam concluded between Tipu Sultan and the British, Malabar which was conquered by him, became a part of the province of Bombay. But in 1800 it was made a district of the Madras presidency. On the other hand, Travancore and Cochin remained as two princely states under British paramountcy, the former having the maximum autonomy corresponding to that of Hyderabad. Of the three territorial units, Travancore the largest, had an area of 7,625 sq. miles

as against 5,561 of Malabar and 1,480 of Cochin. With its highest rate of literacy in the country and enlightened rulers, Travancore was the home of several progressive movements that were responsible for the social transformation and spiritual regeneration of Kerala. As India attained independence, British paramountcy over Travancore and Cochin was lifted and they reemerged to be in legal theory as two sovereign states although this position was not appreciated by the government of India.

Demands for responsible government were raised in both Travancore and Cochin as early as the thirties and the Travancore State Congress and the Cochin Praja Mandal formed and functioned under the patronage of the Indian National Congress (INC) automatically became its official branches with the political emancipation of the country.

As a progressive state, Travancore had a legislative tradition beginning from 1888, and a bicameral legislature of great institutional merit was efficiently functioning there from 1932-33. In the general elections held in 1948, the Travancore State Congress and the Cochin Praja Mandal secured overwhelming majority of seats in their respective legislatures. In Travancore, the first popular ministry headed by Pattom Thanu Pillai was sworn in on March 24, 1948 and E. Ikkanda Warriar formed a Congress government in the same year in Cochin. On July 1, 1949, Cochin was merged with Travancore to form the United State of Travancore and Cochin under the premiership (later chief ministership) of T.K. Narayana Pillai as decided by the state department of the Government of India.

Malabar continued to be a district of the sprawling composite Madras state creating little impact on its politics and administration. The decision to redraw the map of India on linguistic basis, was taken in 1956 following the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission when Travancore-Cochin was under President's rule and its popular assembly stood dissolved. In order to overcome the constitutional hurdles in dealing with the boundaries of Travancore as chosen by the Centre, article 3 of the Constitution of India was arbitrarily suspended by an executive fiat. The state of Malayalam speaking Kerala was formed on November 1, 1956

by ceding the four southern taluks of Travancore, namely, Thovala, Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode having a total area of 646 sq. miles, now constituting the Kanyakumari district and almost the entire Shencottah in the east, to Madras (Tamil Nadu) and adding the district of Malabar and the Kasargod taluk of South Canara to Travancore-Cochin.

In the accession of Travancore to India, in its integration with Cochin and finally in the formation of linguistic Kerala, Travancore had increasingly suffered displaying helpless generosity and inescapable renunciation, territorially, administratively, economically and from the angle of autonomy. The state lost among other things, its currency and coinage, gold reserve, broadcasting system, railways, anchal (internal post), customs barriers, telephone network, humane penal laws, civil service and armed forces and finally the four southern taluks which were its granary or rice bowl.

The Centre had appropriated a number of its departments evolving a very curious and ingenious formula that when their assets were taken over, the responsibility for their liabilities also would be borne. In fact, in the stringent financial discipline practised by the state, the departments had only assets and fewer liabilities. The accession of Travancore, therefore, was an integration by expropriation. Perhaps no other native state in India was forced to offer and suffer so much for a united India of the Congress conception as did Travancore but its sacrifices remain in the discarded book of public oblivion.

Kerala which abounds in myrtle vegetation, bewitching sceneries and placid lagoons now measures 15,002 sq. miles which is 132 sq. miles less than the total area of the Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh. Its population according to the 1981 census is 25,403,217 which by the way of living chosen by the Malayalees is almost evenly distributed in the state with minor concentrations in the cities.

Although constantly ravaged or denuded by political freebooters well protected by their religious organisations flaunting minority labels, the state has an evergreen forest belt extending over 300 miles which is the abode of rich flora, fauna and sylva. It has an ornis consisting of a variety of

colourful species, rapturously delightful.

A land of abundant water resources, Kerala has 44 rivers of which three take their course eastward and 41 are west flowing. These 44 rivers together with the five rivers of four taluks of South Travancore given away to Tamil Nadu, form an aqua-cradle that has given rise to a distinctive riparian civilisation extending over 18,000 sq. miles in the west coast. The three longest rivers of Kerala are Periyar (244 kms) Bharatapuzha (209 kms) and Pamba (176 kms).

There are 20 major backwaters in the state which are spectacles of magnificent sea-scapes and provide a smooth inland waterway with inter-connecting canals. Natural ponds and pools are numerous and everywhere in the state which has also two large pure water lakes, the one in Sasthamkottah and the other in Neyyattinkara. Monsoon the south western as well as the north-eastern lavishly favours the state which has a rainfall varying from 65" to 250", the annual average being 136". Of late, wanton ecological disturbances, especially the destruction of forests carried on by the political vandals, have adversely affected the conditions of monsoon to cause wide-spread drought ruinous to the luxuriant vegetation.

The people of Kerala in spite of their infinite fragmentation largely belong to a single ethnic stock. Mixture of blood as a natural process in human mobility takes place all over the world and Kerala may have its own share although by no standard, it can be quantified. There might have been a few immigrants from west Asian regions just as there have always been movement of people from Kerala to Arab lands.

The largest immigrants to Kerala who still get a place in the decennial census are the Tamils, especially Tamil Brahmins but their linguistic identity except in their private life, has almost reached a vanishing point. Kerala has the miracle of that cultural osmosis which renders natural settings for any outsider or foreigner by his own free volition, to take to the Malayalee way of living.

Until the 8th century Kerala was a Buddhist country and unlike the rest of India which passed from primitive tribalism to pristine Brahminism, from Brahminism to Buddhism and from Buddhism to Brahminic Hinduism, Kerala led itself from tribalism to Buddhism and from Buddhism to Brahminic

Hinduism. The social rationality left by Buddhism is still strong in Kerala and is an important element that influences even today the mind of the people for communal harmony.

Before the entry of Brahminism, Kerala society was egalitarian and according to the Ballads of the North, Mahabali, the greatest of the Buddhist emperors of Kerala by systematic measures not only ensured human equality and happiness of everyone but eliminated social evils, diseases, epidemics and infant mortality and the causes of fraud, deceit and treachery. His legal system made no discrimination but extended equally justice to even women and children. He made effective arrangements for reform in place of retribution.

The proponents of caste system broke into Kerala from the north between the 7th century AD and the 8th but they could not make any headway as their socio-religious concepts sounded strange and tyrannical to its intensely Buddhist people. In sheer disgust, the promoters of caste, according to a number of authorities¹ turned to prosperous fisherfolk and converted them to Brahmins to head a society of their design in Kerala. They have gradually won over the chieftains of the various principalities ordaining them to be Kshatriyas by elaborate and impressive rituals² and extending justification for their every action.

The craving of the local chieftains to become Kshatriyas in order to climb new social heights, acquire subtle methods and techniques of social control and assume despotic authority to be exercised without restraint over the vast masses to the benefit of a privileged few, virtually pushed the equalitarian Buddhists to a state of unnerving apprehension. It was a betrayal of the Buddhist masses by the Buddhist rulers unable to resist the temptations and enticement of the revived

¹(1) Maratha Account; (2) Sahyadri Khanda.

²*They are the Hiranyagarbha Yaga and Padmagarbha Yaga.* In Hiranyagarbha a Sudra king enters the interior of a cow made of solid gold, through its anal region and comes out through its mouth amidst the chantings of the Brahmin priests to secure the status of Kshatriya. The cow then becomes the exclusive property of the priests.

In Padmagarbha, a Sudra king enters a huge cylindrical water tub in which are kept lotus flowers made of gold and takes a dip as vedic hymns are recited by the Brahmin priests. He is thus baptised to be a Kshatriya.

Brahminism.

Trade, commerce and cottage industries were in the hands of staunch Buddhists organised into powerful guilds, and their resistance to the caste system forced its propagators in the absence of the requisite skill, knowledge and experience for entrepreneurial economic activities, to turn their attention to the constituting of a class of Sudras for the services of the Brahmins as conceived by the theory of Chaturvarnya.

The institution of untouchability which had taken a rabid form in Kerala, also prevented the emergence of Vaisyas to run business for the success of which free intercourse or uninhibited contact between different social groups was essential. The void of a caste taken to trade and commerce as its traditional occupation, which is even now pronounced in Kerala society, is attributable to Brahminic failures to proselytise the Buddhist traders and merchants into the third varna. As the Brahmins gained social supremacy, they avenged their defeat by declaring traffic, business and seafaring as heathenish Buddhistic pursuits, ignoble by their standards.

As caste system advanced in Kerala, the entire society was infinitely fragmented and a virulent form of untouchability was practised. Denied of political patronage and faced with the threat of imminent persecution, outstanding Buddhist scholars and intellectuals consented themselves to be converted to Brahmins but a significant section of them in defending their faith, had taken shelter in the three forest shrines of Sabarimala, Achankovil and Aryankavu which after a period of time were consecrated into Hindu temples by the triumphant Brahminism with the help of the Kshatriyas of its creation.

To escape from the tyranny and persecution of caste, more than five lakh Buddhists and Buddhist fishermen migrated to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) between the 14th and 16th centuries and most of them were absorbed, in course of time, into the Ceylonese society as Salagamas and Karavas.

By the beginning of the 17th century caste hierarchy and Brahminic supremacy were relatively well established in Kerala and with the Zamorin (Samootiri) of Calicut gaining supremacy in the political affairs of Malabar, Cochin securing a stability which reassured its identity and the making of Travancore by Marthanda Varma by conquest and annexation in the

18th century, caste has become more rigid and regressive in Kerala.

The Malayalee Brahmins known by the name Nampootiri who formed a tiny, trifle minority and the ruling elite styling themselves as Kshatriyas, established their authority over the land and from the precincts of the temples, which they made into the centre of all social activities, they ran the administration and exercised social control over the entire disorganised masses. The place of Vaisyas which was made still vacant by the denunciation of the Buddhists was gradually taken over by the Ambalavasis (temple servants) who were the most pliable to their purposes.

As the need of services multiplied, more and more people were recruited and converted to Sudras and by the wake of the 19th century, there were 96 groups of Sudras of various grades and differing status within their larger species. All the four varnas as they were transplanted to Kerala including the spurious third of the Ambalavasis, could not account for more than one-sixth of the total population and the overwhelming majority of the people with their Buddhistic past continued to be indifferent or opposed to the caste system and therefore completely alienated and branded disparagingly as Baudhas (Buddhists) or Ezhavas³ (those who follow the religion of Ceylonese and maintain relations with them).

A people once attained the highest refinements, the Ezhavas produced great military leaders, eminent physicians, reputed astrologers and distinguished Sanskrit scholars throughout the history of Kerala notwithstanding their exclusion from the Brahminic government. Nevertheless, their refusal to join the Brahminic social order, led to their vindictive relegation, social suppression and eventual demoralisation.

As the Christian seafaring merchants from Syria and the Arab Muslim traders landed on the sandy shores of Kerala, the Ezhavas with their Buddhistic and commercial background and caste-free culture associated with them. They acted for a long time as the middle men between the alien maritime merchants and the producing indigenous agricultural community and manufacturing guilds. Kerala's rationalist, the late

³Ezham is the ancient Tamil name for Ceylon or Sri Lanka.

M.C. Joseph maintains that the first converts to Christianity were from the Buddhists who were in a political and religious bewilderment.

The Teresa Church Copper Plate Edict believed to have been issued in 848-49 AD by Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal, the ruler of Venad (Southern Travancore) permitting Maruvan Sapir Easo to build a church (palli) also conferred upon four Ezhava families and eight of their aids (Ezhakkaiyas) full and unrestrained freedom of trade in the Quilon city (Nakaram).

There is however a strong opinion that Ayyan Atikal (humble servant of the Buddha) who issued the copper plate, himself was a Buddhist as revealed by his name and Sapir Easo is none other than Sabreesa who must have probably been the Buddhist leader who took the initiative of building the shrine of Dharma Sasta (the Buddha) in Sabarimala. Palli itself is originally a Pali word for the Buddhist church absorbed into Malayalam and later on, was used to refer to Muhammedan mosque and Christian church, and Sabarimala is named after Sabareesa who discovered the place for the safe living of the Buddhist monks and scholars in the midst of the thick forest.

The inscriptions (1028-43 AD) in the Thazhakad church near Irinjalakuda speak of certain privileges granted to two Christian merchants, Chathan Vadukan (the shaven headed Sradha; a name of the Buddha) and Iravi Chathan (Sradha—the Buddha as brilliant as the sun). Both these names are confirmative of the fact that they were indubitably Buddhists or new converts to Christianity from the declining Buddhism. The close association or intimate relations of the Ezhavas and the Christians from the very introduction of Christianity is an established fact. In spite of its claim of finding proselytes in Kerala in the sixth century, Christianity remained in obscurity and was largely confined to a few average or modest families until the arrival of the European mercantile powers, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English. By then Kerala society was more fragmented and there were more than 300 castes with their proliferating sub-divisions.

Untouchability has assumed a dehumanising form and every caste has to keep a polluting distance. The lower the caste, the longer the distance, it had to keep. Thus even between

the touch-not-able Nampootiri Brahmins and the ruling Kshatriyas, a distance of three feet was prescribed, and the Sudras (Nairs) had to stand 13 feet away from the Nampootiris, eight feet from the Kshatriyas and four feet from the high class Ambalavasis. In fact caste-consciousness has made the entire Kerala, the abode of untouchability and none had escaped its fierce fangs. Buddhism could not any longer be continued as a religion in the face of the savage persecution, and the Ezhavas, the remnants of the original inhabitants of Kerala and still the most numerous of all social groups and castes, took the lead in embracing Islam and Christianity.

Even before the European mercantile powers established contacts with Kerala, Islam proved itself to be a saviour and unifying force for the lower castes because it had the fanatic zeal and courage to use collective violence to protect its followers from the oppressions of the caste-Hindus. Christianity acquired its strength to come to the rescue of its converts first from the Portuguese and finally from the British. In 1848 Lord Dalhousie threatened the Maharajas of Travancore and Cochin that they would be deposed 'summarily' if any humiliating treatment were meted out to a single Christian convert, whatever might be the custom of the caste-Hindus. The successive governors of Madras and the British residents posted in Travancore and Cochin were equally eager to assure complete safety to the native Christians. Men of fortitude and resolve and scholars of eminence, most western Christian missionaries dedicated themselves to the cause of upliftment of the fallen, and acted as a phalanx to the new converts as well as to the old. The rule as correctly pointed out by census commissioner J.A. Bains in 1888 was that where there was more oppression there was more conversion.

From the beginning especially after Brahminic Hinduism had established its supremacy, conversion to other religions mainly Islam and Christianity was given the maximum encouragement by all petty chieftains. The Zamorin of Calicut himself for enhancing his revenues from customs and trade, ordered a few hundred Ezhavas and Pulayas to migrate from Hinduism to Christianity to provide the labour link between the Christian merchants and his commercial agents.

The chiefs of two principalities, Tekkamkoor and Vadak-

kamkoor vanished into the making of the erstwhile Travancore state, deliberately provided all facilities to the seafaring foreign powers to convert lower castes to Christianity for pleasing considerations.

The Raja of Cochin who virtually remained a vassal to the Portuguese over a period of half a century, not only had given them a free hand to propagate Catholic Christianity but even granted their plea to 'provert'⁴ the Pulayas who had helped them to vanquish the princeling of Edappalli, to be Nairs. On the whole, the administration of various units of Kerala had fully favoured conversion of lower communities to Islam or Christianity for obvious gains.

Between the 17th century and the 19th, the Ezhavas who formed the great bulk of the population, increasingly were relegated and finally excluded from the state administration, and during the villainous rule of the most cruel and crafty Dalava (chief of the state administration) Velu Thampi, they were totally removed from the armed forces on the convenient plea of effecting economy.

The people who never accepted or reconciled to the position given to them in the caste hierarchy, the Ezhavas embraced in large numbers Christianity and Islam to overcome the disabilities to which they were subjected by the irrational Hindu social hegemony. Another community which in their thousands and at places *en masse* came within the Christian fold to be known as the Latin Catholics, was the fisherfolk who throughout their existence continued to be averse to the idea of social inequality and outrightly defiant of caste. In some areas especially of Malabar, a sizable section of them sought the shield of the crescent.

In the highlands of Travancore and Cochin, the Christian proselytes were largely from the tribes who were once independent communities in the midlands but had sought refuge

⁴When a community or social group within a religion has successfully moved to take or is raised to a higher position, it is 'proverted'. Whereas a total change including of religion is brought about by conversion, it is a favourable, (pro) progressive change, promoting the status within the followers of a religion that is achieved by proversion.

(vide S.N. Sadasivan, *Party and Democracy in India*, New Delhi, Tata McGraw-Hill, 1977, pp. 202-203).

in the hills and foothills to escape from the repression of the caste-Hindus. The Ezhava conversion constantly encouraged major segments of the 175 communities below them to undergo baptism and to integrate themselves with the other converts to be an indispensable part of the Christian brotherhood. However, the Christians in many places did not allow the converted Pulayas and Parayas, the members of the two lowest untouchable castes to seek equality with them which although accounts for the failure of their religion, had enabled a more advanced section of them to raise later snobbish social claims.

The tempo of proselytisation to Christianity was largely confined to Cochin and Travancore, the seats of impervious, and inflexible Hindu orthodoxy which regulated the behaviour of their rulers almost every step with the force of crass-obscurantism and enthralling superstition. Christian conversion was at its peak from the close of the 18th century to the twenties of the 20th century mainly because the two princely states were given full external and internal security by the British so as to carry on their social policy of discrimination and oppression which itself compelled the so-called lower communities to get out of the Hindu fold. In contrast to Travancore and Cochin, in Malabar where the expansion of Islam has come to a virtual standstill with the withdrawal of the Arabs from the spice trade, and the fall of Hyder and Tipu, conversion to Christianity was few and far between because of the social freedom guaranteed to every community by the British irrespective of its caste and religion.

The non-acceptance of Christianity by Malabar except in an extremely small measure which is directly attributable to the social benevolence of the British, also tends to confirm that the period of mass conversion in Travancore and Cochin was from the second half of the 17th century to the first quarter of the 20th.

Not unlikely, the proximity, more similarity of Christianity to Buddhism particularly in parables, doctrines, discipline, rituals, institutions and ethics might have served as an impetus to the Buddhists to embrace Christianity at a time when they were socially and religiously destitute.

In fact, foreign travelogue writers mistook the clean shaven

Buddhists wearing the yellow robes and strings of beads (rosary) for Christians and until recently both Muslims and Christians were referred to as Buddhists by the caste-Hindus in Kerala. A number of western scholars including Arthur Lillie⁵ as a result of their persistent and painstaking research, have brought out the heavy indebtedness of Christianity to Buddhism.

Although four in every ten and one in every four Ezhavas opted for Christianity and Islam respectively, the remaining segment of the community refused to take the shortcut of conversion to overcome the social relegation and was determined to fight the inequalities within Hindu society. In the 19th century, there emerged among the Ezhavas a number of great men, Sree Narayana⁶, the saint of sublime virtues, Dr. P. Palpu, an eminent physician and an inspired and indomitable organiser and social crusader, N. Kumaran Asan, the greatest of the Malayalam poets and visionary and T.K. Madhavan, the tempestuous social revolutionary. They by their extra-ordinary geniuses had not only reorganised the Ezhavas into a progressive community but brought about a veritable social revolution in Kerala.

Two Sanskrit celebrities, Velutheri Kesavan Vaidyan and Perun-nelli Krishnan Vaidyan who by their profound erudition and exceptional capacity for rendering Sanskrit into Malayalam, had exercised highest influence on the nobility in Travancore. Indubitably, it is by their wholehearted and unreserved but still not fully acknowledged intellectual contributions that some conspicuous members of the Hindu aristocracy attained their prominence in Malayalam literature. A number of other Ezhava intellectuals like K. Ayyappan, Mooloor Padmanabha Panicker and Moorkot Kumaran had taken the lead to question the scholastic pretensions of the Hindu orthodoxy and to break the traditional myths upon which it thrived.

The Ezhavas, the surviving portion of the parental commu-

⁵ Vide 1. Arthur Lillie, *Buddhism in Christendom or Jesus, the Essene* (original 1887) (New Delhi, Unity Book Service, Reprint, 1984).

2. Arthur Lillie, *India in Primitive Christianity*, (original 1893), (Delhi, Rare Reprints, Reprint, 1981.)

⁶ Vide Annexure 1.

nity of Kerala, are numerically the largest single in the state and they still rever their Buddhistic past. They are an intellectual community taken to occupations ranging from astrology to indigenous medicine which has traditionally attracted them in their thousands.

A multi-professional community, they have made supreme sacrifices for fighting social inequality and restoring human dignity to the under-privileged. The Ezhavas were deliberately derided and sought to be socially downgraded because they alone could rise in revolt against the oppressive and exploiting caste system, intellectually compete with and often excel the caste-Hindus and expose the myth of sacerdotal supremacy advancing cogent reasons for human equality.

A most mis-represented and mis-reported community outside, due to the rampant jealousy, spite and prejudice which the Nairs and the Christians foster against them, the Ezhavas have hardly a parallel in any other part of India. Intellectually they are as brilliant as the Jews but for justice and human rights they have the passion of the British middle classes of the 19th century.

The Sudras of Kerala who were recruited to serve the Brahminic system of society, were those who renounced Buddhism and embraced Hinduism over a period of 600 years when social mobility on a selective basis was the prevailing rule. For the next 200 years, as necessitated by the expediency of the caste system, many influential Ezhavas allowed themselves to be brought into the fold of the Sudras and conversely many poor Sudras were forced into the general body of the Ezhavas. The localism inherent in the caste system also enabled several caste groups to migrate from one locality to another and to claim a higher caste status for which the geography and topography of the state were highly favourable especially in the absence of proper communication.

By the self-eliminating laws evolved for their dominance, the Nampootiris and the Kshatriyas gradually dwindled in their number facilitating the Sudras to ascend to a proximate position and share at the subordinate levels power immediately exercisable over the masses. A significant section of the Sudras became managers of the estates of the Nampootiris or cultivating tenants or supervisors, of the properties of the

Kshatriya houses. However, their masses were subjected to exploitation but their elite were extended a number of privileges over the Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims which enabled them to take lead in the governmental sphere. Enlightened by the social ferment in the Madras city, the Sudra intellectuals who moved there from the Malabar district, had realised that the term Sudra was neither an honorific nor appropriate to their community and successfully influenced the government of Madras to change it to Nair in all government records and documents.

In Cochin, the Nair Act was passed in 1920 in consequence of which the name of Sudra was ceased to be used for official purposes. One of the objectives of the Nair Service Society in its inception days, was to bring pressure upon the Travancore government to adopt the name Nair in place of Malayalee Sudra and it was achieved with the passing of the Nair Act by the Travancore Legislative Assembly in 1925. The Nairs are a part of the original Buddhist society of Kerala and their indoctrination and regimentation were the main forces that had driven the masses of Kerala to seek the shelter of the cross and the crescent. In any society deification and divinification thrive only by religionisation of things and bastardisation and brutalisation of supporting social groups.

The Nairs are today a powerful community mainly as a result of the efforts of Mannathu Padmanabhan whose social vision was responsible for reducing the inequality between the various sub-castes within and for inspiring them to have a common identity.

As mentioned already, Christianity remained obscure and confined to a small group scattered among the general masses, till the Portuguese and the English established contact with them. The Portuguese reclaimed a section of the existing native Christians using Syriac liturgy in their church and therefore known as Syrian Christians, to Catholicism and put pressures on the caste-Hindus to give them a slightly better deal in the Kerala's social scheme. In the coastal regions, the Portuguese converted the fishing community in their thousands and laid a strong foundation for the Latin Catholic Church. Although the Syrian merchants who brought the religion to Kerala believably between the 11th and the 12th century,

entirely retreated leaving little evidence of their contact, the Syrian clergy in Antiochia or Babylon woke up at this juncture and deputed some of its members to Kerala to regroup the members of its church. With all these, it is the British who lavishly patronised the existing native Christians and won for Christianity its mass following. The principal beneficiaries of the extensive socio-economic activities of the British missionaries were the native Christians.

As on the one side, the British institutional genius sought to create imposing churches, well managed schools and colleges and centres of charity to bring about the social solidarity of the Christians, on the other, the British equipped them with commercial initiative, entrepreneurship and business strategy to progress economically. The paradox of their advancement is that of late they, particularly their elite, have become oblivious of their social history and tended to look down upon the same communities to which they or their ancestors once belonged, with the object of securing for them a social capillarity. Casteless followers of a casteless religion brought by a casteless civilisation, the Christians through myth building and veiled snobbery sought for themselves positions in the Hindu social hierarchy which the caste-Hindus were not altogether disinclined to grant for economic gains.

In 1875 the western missionaries not only thwarted the attempt of the census authorities of the state to list the former castes of the Christian converts on the plea that their religion did not recognise caste distinctions but went further to pressurise the dewan of Travancore to issue a directive to the census enumerators not to ask the castes of the native converts.

The distinction of Christianity in Kerala is to be sought not in the mythical Brahminic conversion, not in its introduction by foreign merchants trading with Kerala, not in its doctrine which in fact is only a simple and intelligible part of the transcendent philosophy of Buddhism, not in the system and discipline of its institutions but in its acceptance by the Buddhists or Ezhavas who had the highest cultural attainments, intellectual predominance and psychic efficiency in spite of the political orphanage and consequent social discrimination

they had to suffer.

It is the unflinching faith in human equality of the Ezhavas embraced Christianity, and their unremitting hostility to caste that prompted them to integrate themselves with the converted socially deprived communities like the Kuravas, Vettuvas, Paravas and Tandans.

It is a mysterious and intriguing behaviour of Christianity in Kerala that the proselytes from the Pulayas and Parayas perhaps because of their extremely abject environment and their social status for ages as mere agrestic slaves, are refused a place in its social organisation in the state. On the other hand, converted Ulladans, a very small community but the lowest of the lowest, could obliterate their original identity and easily be absorbed into the general body of the Christians.

As conversion was induced largely by oppression combined with poverty, the Christian concentrations are in the areas which were once the centres of Hindu orthodoxy and there they constitute a definite majority which is significant from the electoral angle. The Christians moved with the Ezhavas till 1950-52 when on realising their economic and electoral strength, they parted company with the Ezhavas and after a short-lived alliance with the Nairs to promote their vested interests, had taken to an independent line to benefit from the divisive communal politics of Kerala.

Islamic proselytisation did not take rapid strides in Travancore and Cochin as in Malabar mainly because Christianity with its attractions and offers emerged as its serious competitor. Islam sternly repudiated all distinctions of caste and unified its followers overwhelmingly from the lower strata of the Hindus into a homogeneous community. In their early days the Muslims like the Christians were totally indigenous and hardly remained isolated from the Hindu masses but with the integration of Malabar with Travancore-Cochin, they had become conscious of their constituency-wise majorities and revived the old Muslim League under a new garb to occupy a point crucial to political stability in Kerala.

TWO

POLITICS AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS

The politics of Kerala as well as its administration is in fact the making of permutations and combinations of the four communities, the Ezhavas, the Nairs, the Christians and the Muslims. In the former Travancore state for over twentyfive years from the twenties, the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims forged an alliance to make their way into the administration in which the Nairs were well entrenched. After the formation of the linguistic Kerala the more self-conscious and militant Muslims of Malabar with their pocket boroughs, gave a lead to isolate the community and brought it to a bargaining position from where they had forced all political parties of the state irrespective of their ideological beliefs to confess their secular pretensions and make them competitively subservient to its designs. Of the total population of the state, the Ezhavas form 22.19 per cent, the Christians 22.14, the Muslims 19.12 and the Nairs 14.46.

In politics as also in social development Travancore state has invariably been the model for Cochin and Malabar and the present administrative set-up of Kerala is but the expansion of the administration of the Travancore state. The first democratic government in Travancore had come into being on March 24, 1948, with Pattom Thanu Pillai as chief minister. His two colleagues were C. Kesavan and T.M. Varghese. It was C. Kesavan who by his stirring oratory and exceptional organising ability moulded the politics of the state into its mass form and directed it to its logical ends.

The three leaders represented the three major communities of the state, the Nairs, the Ezhavas and the Christians. Traditionalist by outlook, Thanu Pillai deviating from the democratic norms, developed authoritarian tendencies in the management of the government which resulted in the resignation of Kesavan and Varghese from the government and his own displacement almost within six months. Politics has always

been on communal lines in Kerala and to an outsider, confusing because of the alignments and disalignments formed by the four communities from time to time.

MINISTRIES IN POWER

Sl. No.	Head of Ministry	Period in power	
		From	To
1.	Pattom Thanu Pillai	Mar. 24, 1948	Oct. 1948
2.	T.K. Narayana Pillai	Oct. 20, 1948	Mar. 1, 1951
3.	C. Kesavan	Mar. 5, 1951	Feb. 10, 1952
4.	A.J. John ¹	Mar. 12, 1952	Sep. 23, 1953
5.	Pattom Thanu Pillai	Mar. 16, 1954	Feb. 10, 1955
6.	P. Govinda Menon	Feb. 14, 1955	Mar. 11, 1956
7.	<i>President's Rule</i>	Mar. 23, 1956	Apr. 5, 1957
8.	E.M.S. Namboodiripad	Apr. 5, 1957	Jul. 31, 1959
9.	<i>President's Rule</i>	Jul. 31, 1959	Feb. 22, 1960
10.	Pattom Thanu Pillai	Feb. 22, 1960	Sep. 25, 1962
11.	R. Sankar	Sep. 26, 1962	Sep. 8, 1964
12.	<i>President's Rule</i>	Sep. 10, 1964	Mar. 5, 1967
13.	E.M.S. Namboodiripad	Mar. 5, 1967	Oct. 24, 1969
14.	C. Achutha Menon	Nov. 1, 1969	Aug. 1, 1970
15.	<i>President's Rule</i>	Aug. 4, 1970	Oct. 4, 1970
16.	C. Achutha Menon	Oct. 4, 1970	Jul. 9, 1971
17.	C. Achutha Menon (Coalition)	Jul. 10, 1971	Mar. 2, 1977
18.	K. Karunakaran	Mar. 22, 1977	Apr. 5, 1977
19.	A.K. Antony	Apr. 27, 1977	Oct. 27, 1978
20.	P.K. Vasudevan Nair	Oct. 27, 1978	Oct. 7, 1979
21.	C.H. Mohammed Koya	Oct. 12, 1979	Dec. 1, 1979
22.	<i>President's Rule</i>	Dec. 5, 1979	Jan. 24, 1980
23.	E.K. Nayanar	Jan. 25, 1980	Oct. 20, 1981
24.	<i>President's Rule</i>	Oct. 21, 1981	Dec. 28, 1981
25.	K. Karunakaran	Dec. 28, 1981	Mar. 17, 1982
26.	<i>President's Rule</i>	Mar. 17, 1982	May 19-23, 1982
27.	K. Karunakaran	May 24, 1982	Mar. 25, 1987
28.	E.K. Nayanar	Mar. 26, 1987	

¹A.J. John continued as the head of the caretaker ministry from September 23, 1953 to March 15, 1954.

No chief minister in Kerala could exercise comprehensive authority over the government except with the consent of his colleagues. Every ministry whether formed by a single party or a combination of parties, virtually functioned as a coalition of the four communities. The A.J. John ministry (March 1952 to September 1953) in the erstwhile Travancore-Cochin was precariously dependent on the support of the legislators of the Travancore Tamil Nad Congress which was operating in South Travancore for the inclusion of its four taluks in the Madras state. The communists who claimed themselves to be ultra secularists, could not ignore the communal situation in Kerala that in all the ministries they had formed so far, representation had to be given to the four leading communities.

From the inception of democratic government, instability has been a recurring phenomenon in Kerala but during the chief ministership of C. Achutha Menon over a period of seven years between 1970 and 1979 stability was brought in, mostly because of his capacity to practice the delicate art of achieving social compromises.

Although no state could remain immune to President's rule, Kerala has been its frequent victim and perhaps the first state where it was imposed, if the Patiala and East Punjab States Union disappeared into the linguistic reorganisation of the country, is to be ignored. Among the chief ministers only A.J. John was successful in heading a caretaker ministry from September 1953 to March 1954 in the state after he lost his legislative majority, because in those days the Centre professedly nurtured some democratic susceptibilities.

The state had come under President's rule seven times in about 26 years from March 1956 to March 1982; its longest spell was over two years and a half, after a motion of no-confidence was vengefully carried out on September 8, 1964 in the state assembly against the Congress ministry headed by R. Sankar. No chief minister except Achutha Menon and in recent years K. Karunakaran could have a full tenure, primarily due to the animosity that one principal community harboured for another. There were so far 21 ministries and 13 chief ministers in Kerala.

President's rule which is an imperialist prescriptive where a democratic self-corrective is appropriate, has done little good

to the state, in view of the fact that outside bureaucrats appointed as advisers to the governor hardly cared for the welfare of the people or for the interests of the state. Each period of President's rule turned the state into a victim of several arbitrary decisions most of which were taken at the behest of the Congress high command. A number of cases of supreme significance like the redrawing of the boundaries of the state and conversion of departmental undertakings into public corporations were settled hurriedly in high-handed bureaucratic style. President's rule which has always in fact been a euphemism for the indirect control of the state by the party in power at the Centre, allowed adequate elbow room for bureaucratic vagaries and the machinations of the INC.

The experience of active coalitions is not different from that of passive coalitions in the state², as the basic factors of instability remain unchanged. For the same reason, none of the ministries could bring into force any radical reform in the state and even the modest measures adopted by the first communist ministry aimed at abolition of landlordism and rendering relief to the private school teachers from the exploitation of their managers were substantially defeated by the vested interests. While the intellectual content of Indian politics has been steadily on the decline, Kerala could hardly contribute to stem the rot except its basic social rationality which too has been heavily eroded by the criminalisation of politics advancing fast to the south from the north. Nevertheless, among the chief ministers C. Kesavan, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, R. Sankar and C. Achutha Menon had a high intellectual level and striven to use the administration for a limited social change. They also had been successful to a great extent in exercising political control over the bureaucracy.

The coalition politics of the state has not only diluted the concept of collective responsibility of the ministry but virtually turned each department into a realm or freehold of the concerned minister which is perhaps the price each chief minister has to pay for his continuance in office. The ecological vandalism that is unremittingly carried on with impunity

²S.N. Sadasivan, *Party and Democracy in India*, *op. cit.*, p. 442.

in the state, is partly attributable to the chief minister's reluctance or helplessness to use the conventional authority inherent in his position.

The state has a long tradition of parliamentary life. The first legislative assembly of Travancore was formed in 1888 and it was transformed into a bicameral one in 1904. However, the state returned to unicameralism in 1921 as the enhancement of the powers and membership of the lower house was envisaged. In 1932 the legislature again was reconstituted with two chambers, the upper chamber being the state council and the lower, the state assembly or praja sabha. The quality of discipline and debate in the legislature was indeed very high and the members themselves were drawn from eminent intellectuals and educated aristocracy of every community.

With the formation of the first popular ministry in Travancore in March 1948 on universal adult franchise, the upper house ceased to be functional and with the integration of Travancore and Cochin on July 1, 1949, the question of a second house had altogether lost its merit. Kerala was formed in November 1956 when the Travancore-Cochin assembly stood dissolved, and therefore, the members of the Madras legislature from Malabar had to forfeit the remaining part of their tenure.

The first Kerala assembly came into being on April 5, 1957 with a clear majority for the undivided Communist Party. The communists endeavoured to use the legislature as an instrument of modest social change but they encountered stiff resistance from the bourgeoisie. At no time during the Congress rule the opposition was given its rightful place in the legislature but as the left united front led by the communist-marxists captured power in January 1980, the leader of the Congress (I)³ legislature party, the principal opposition group was given the rank and pay of a cabinet minister and all the attendant perquisites due for the post. The state assembly has in all 140 members contributed by no less than ten parties and their splinter groups styling under various names.

Between 1948 and 1956 in spite of its rapid debilitation, the INC did not favour other parties forming a ruling coali-

³INC (Indira Gandhi faction).

tion but it extended support to Pattom Thanu Pillai, the Congressman turned socialist, to form a minority Praja Socialist Party ministry in March 1954. The Thanu Pillai government continued in power until February 1955 when a ministry formed by P. Govinda Menon with the help of the Travancore Tamil Nad Congress which stood for linguistic separation of southern Travancore, replaced it. As Govinda Menon was not amenable to the extent expected by the Nair leader Mananthu Padmanabhan, the latter used his henchmen and hatchetmen to vote him out of power taking advantage of a crucial opportunity.

In all the ministerial changes, the assembly has been the testing ground for 'majority' but in 1959 the Congress fusing itself with communalist forces in the state spearheaded an extra-parliamentary and undemocratic crusade against the communist ministry and got it dismissed by the central authority when it had an absolute majority in the legislature. The removal of the ministry was the first major distortion of parliamentary procedure and vulgarisation of democracy in the country. It has forged a nexus between the central authority and instability of the non-Congress ministries in the states sidetracking the well evolved theories establishing the relation between the number of parties and the endurance of government in democracies. Since then extra-parliamentary measures, particularly, organising violent agitations and movements behind the mask of the professed peaceful means, have been encouraged by the party in power at the Centre against governments of other parties in the states. Nevertheless, parliamentary tradition is still strong in Kerala especially on account of its social rationality and vigilance of the people but the coming down of the filthy and fetid political cocktail that is poured into the wide mouth of the Indian funnel reaching its tail end, is only a matter of time.

THREE

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFILE

Travancore had one of the most rationalised structures of administration. Its secretariat was well-organised with a hierarchy having the minimum tiers, specifically designed to achieve smooth coordination and overall efficiency. The secretariat organisation consisted of junior clerk, senior clerk, superintendent, assistant secretary, secretary and chief secretary. There was no wasteful, time consuming and impeding levels between the assistant secretary and secretary, solely inserted to inflate the bureaucratic ego on the specious plea of career promotion. The chief secretary was the senior most of the secretaries and he had full authority over the secretariat although his scale of pay was the same as that of a secretary until World War II when considering the increase in the volume of work and onus of responsibility, he was given a special allowance.

However, the entire secretariat structure has undergone a transformation after independence especially after the states reorganisation¹ and the state has now a confusing variety of secretaries as can be seen in the central secretariat. The state has a large number of officials from the neighbouring Tamil Nadu and their prototypes to administrative reforms and change are naturally the imports from their home state invariably accepted by the political level without an independent scrutiny or advice as to their suitability to Kerala. Unless the political executive has zeal for reform, imagination and vision necessary for administrative change, an abiding interest in political theory and administration, quick grasp and precise and effective expression, the hidden will of the bureaucracy may usurp political authority to supplant the interests of the state

¹For details see S.N. Sadasivan, *Aspects of Kerala's Administration*, Trivandrum, IIPA Kerala Regional Branch, 1980, Chapters on "Administrative Integration of Kerala".

with its own preferences. Following Tamil Nadu, the post of special secretary² was introduced in the state and the policy head of a department which as in Tamil Nadu in some cases is now redesignated as secretary-cum-commissioner perhaps to procrastinate indefinitely the long overdue rationalisation of the secretariat administration.

The secretariat as in any other state, is headed by a chief secretary who was formerly equivalent to a joint secretary at the central level but is now made at par with a secretary of the Union government. The chief secretary is regarded as the defender of the permanent services in the state and has a definite say in the matter of personnel administration. Of course, in the communal welter of the state, he gradually has lost his purely civil service character and emerged as a political choice. However, some chief secretaries due to the strength of their communities and their own persuasive influence continued in their position irrespective of the parties in power.

Chief ministers like R. Sankar who wanted to keep up the non-partisan and non-communal character of the administration brought chief secretaries from outside which however due to the limitations of the incumbents themselves was not proved to be a success. In Kerala most administrative reforms are simply aimed at extending benefits to the personnel of the government rather than the community at large. One of the measures taken by the second communist government is to give wider scope for the clerical employees in the matter of promotion and as a result, a clerk who is recruited directly to the secretariat can legitimately aspire to become an additional secretary to the government sometime before his retirement.

²The writer while being Professor of Public Administration in the Kerala Institute of Public Administration (now Institute of Management in Government) in his implied capacity as adviser to the Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department submitted a proposal to change the designation of special secretary to either senior secretary or secretary. The file as usual wandered from one special secretary to another and finally after a period of four months came back with a number of suggestions and counter-suggestions to find its final abode in the proverbial shelf. It is, however, now learned that the designation special secretary is given to a junior, placed between a secretary and additional secretary.

The secretariat is divided into a number of portfolios which are grouped under ministers. Kerala is one of the very few states in India which has not created deputy ministership or state ministership and therefore, every minister is invariably a member of the state cabinet.

The grouping of portfolios is normally done by taking into consideration, the demands of the coalition partners and not entirely at the will of the chief minister. As a coalition partner, the Muslim League has virtually claimed and secured all important portfolios such as home, education, and forest and put them to use in its best interest. Similarly, two factions of a minor party, the Kerala Congress, successfully claimed the portfolios of home, revenue and finance and the chief ministers irrespective of their party affiliations had only found justification for it.

As the use of the term 'ministry' is an exclusive privilege of the Centre, each portfolio is known by the broad name department. Each portfolio or ministerial department may generally have one or more related departments with it. The portfolio departments are agriculture, development, finance, food, general administration, education, home, housing, industries, irrigation and rehabilitation, labour, law, legislation, local administration and social welfare, personnel and administrative reforms, planning and economic affairs, public works and electricity, revenue and transport and fisheries.

Shown below are the ministerial and associated departments together with their executive heads:

DEPARTMENTAL SYSTEM

<i>Ministerial Department</i>	<i>Associated Department/s</i>	<i>Head of Department</i>
(1)	(2)	(3)
Agriculture	Animal Husbandry Cooperative Dairy Development	Director Registrar Director

(1)	(2)	(3)
	Soil Conservation Special Agricultural } Development Unit }	Director Director
Development	Community Development	Commissioner
Finance	Treasuries State Lotteries Insurance Store's Purchase Taxes	Director Director Director Director
Food	Civil Supplies	Director
General Administra- tion	Official Language (Legislative) Commission Public Relations Tourism Rajya Sainik Board	Director Director Director
Education	General Education Higher Education Archaeology Technical Education Museum and public Gardens Stationery	{ Director of Public Instruction { Director of Collegiate Education { Director of Technical Education Director
Harijan Welfare		Controller Director (Harijan Welfare) Director (Tribal Welfare)
Health	Ayurveda ESI (Insurance and) Medical Services) Health Services Homoeopathy	Director Director (Health) Director Director

(1)	(2)	(3)
Home	Police	Director General of Police
	Prison	{ Inspector General of Prisons
	Fire Force, Civil Defence, and Home Guards	{ Commandant General
	Vigilance	{ Director
Forest	Conservation	{ Chief Conservator of Forest Development
	Vigilance and Taxes	Inspector General of Forest
Housing		
Industries	{ Factories and Boilers } { Directorate }	Director
	Industries and Commerce	Director
	Mining and Geology	Director
Irrigation and Ground Water Rehabilitation (General and Planning)		Chief Hydrogeologist
	Public Health Engineering	Chief Engineer (Water Works)
Labour	Employment Exchanges	Joint Director
	Industrial Training	{ Director of Employment and Training
	Labour	Labour Commissioner
Law		
Legislature		

(1)	(2)	(3)
Local Administration and Social Welfare	Municipalities	Director
	Panchayats	Director
	Town Planning and Architecture	Chief Town Planner
	Social Welfare	Director
Public and Administrative Reforms Department	Institute of Management in Government	Director
Public Works and Electricity	Public Works (Arbitration)	Chief Engineer (Arbitration)
	General Buildings and Roads }	Chief Engineer
	Irrigation and Projects }	Chief Engineer
	National Highways	Chief Engineer
Planning and Economic Affairs	Bureau of Economics and Statistics	Director
	Tropical Government Research Institute	Director (Planning)
Revenue	Land Use Board Survey and Land Records	Commissioner Director
Taxes	Motor Vehicles Branch	Commissioner
	Transport Registration	Inspector General of Registration

(1)	(2)	(3)
Transport and Fisheries	Transport Fisheries Harbour Engineering	Commissioner Director Chief Engineer (Ports)

A department has three heads, the political, the administrative and the executive. The political head, the minister enunciates the policy with the advice of the administrative head (secretary) and the executive head normally having the designation of director, implements the policy under the general supervision of the secretary. However, as the agency in charge of the field units of the department, the executive head is the principal source of information necessary for the formulation of policies and for the making of decisions. Since flexibility has been the rule in the combination of the departments, a secretary may simultaneously have more than one department which may not have much functional inter-relations. In 1980 two departments, fisheries and ports were under one secretary but now the 'ports' has yielded to transport. Likewise, the social welfare department which worked under the secretary of labour, is now with the secretary of local administration.

For some of the departments like the public and administrative reforms and general administration, customarily the chief minister himself is the political head and they transact their business with due regard to the position of the chief secretary.

The heads of departments are generally junior civil servants but the executive control over the large departments like fisheries is invariably entrusted to fairly senior civil servants who are eligible to be appointed as secretary or have already held the post.

Departments like education, health and home have several institutions under them and some of them are headed by directors who are from among the senior civil servants. The

head of health services and the chief engineers of public works department are concurrently designated as additional secretaries to the government in order that they might have a role in evolving the policies and the papers coming out of their offices will be dealt directly by the secretaries of their departments.

A duty most discriminately discharged in the secretariat is the lift operation and once a person has taken to the second floor which is also the top most, he will not be brought down despite his weak heart and rheumatic legs unless he has stuck on his forehead a label that he is not below the rank of deputy secretary. Trained in discourtesy and arrogance, the lift man conceitedly entertains the belief that the abode of God is the second floor of the secretariat and he alone is the vicegerent authorised to take into it human beings alive in his vehicle equipped for vertical take off, very similar to the mythological celestial craft made visible in Indian movies.

BOARD OF REVENUE

Neither in Travancore nor in Cochin there was the board type of administration which has come into vogue only after the formation of Kerala. In the state today several boards are working both in the sphere of government and in the public sector.

In the Travancore state at the vertex of the revenue hierarchy was an officer designated as diwan peishkar who in the united state of Travancore and Cochin continued until 1951 when he was replaced by a board of revenue constituted on the Madras model. It was reconstituted as conceived by the Board of Revenue Act 1957 with wider jurisdiction after the formation of Kerala.

It has in all five members in charge of specific subjects. It exercises control over a number of departments such as revenue, taxes, weights and measures, housing, food, civil supplies, rationing, excise, transport, local bodies, co-operatives, harijan welfare and fisheries.

As the members of the board are senior most civil servants of the state, the secretaries of these departments have to function with great amount of restraint and resilience. As in

Tamil Nadu where the board of revenue had come into existence as early as 1786, in Kerala too, the board of revenue was designated to function as a subordinate government but it has become difficult for the board to play its anticipated role due to plurality of reasons including the self-assertion of the departments, political attitude and perhaps indulgence of its own members.

The board has both inspecting and regulatory powers which it exercises in a business like manner. The board type of administration has, nonetheless, hardly contributed to the raising of the general level of efficiency or keeping up of the standards of performance. In fact productivity is as low as 44 per cent when the salary range indicates that it should be 150 per cent.

A salient factor which is responsible for retarding efficiency and consequently productivity, is the unionisation of the secretariat and in almost every government establishment in the state. Backed by political parties of every ideological hue, the government employees have formed a number of service associations which are too sensitive to their rights and privileges and too sulky in their services to society.

However, as the appellate body, the board of revenue has its significance undiminished. A state which closely follows the foot-steps of Tamil Nadu in administrative reforms and has shown little originality in organisational set-up, Kerala may find reasons to abolish the board of revenue as the Tamil Nadu government has already done so.

The other important boards are the land use board and the electricity board, chairmen of both of which are senior civil servants. The department of electricity has a secretary who is largely engaged in liaison between the board and the government and he looks after the functions not assigned to the board.

Planning Board

In Kerala a number of left parties operating in the "right direction" hold planning as fundamental to development and assign a significant place to it in the system of administration. However, it is different things for different political parties both in its semantics and substance although there is

ostensible agreement among them with regard to its institutional arrangements.

The planning board of the state is constituted of a chairman, three members and a secretary. The chief minister is the *ex-officio* chairman of the board but the vice-chairman is a full time official appointed on political consideration. The board has six divisions, namely, transport and industry, perspective planning, project, district planning, evaluation and agriculture.

The head of each division is called chief who is a specialist in the subject for which he is responsible. The planning board has its offices throughout the state to collect information, and data necessary for its functions. The vice-chairman of the board is equivalent to the chief secretary of the state and the secretary, planning department, is concurrently the secretary to the board.

In Kerala where every square inch of land is brought under intensive cultivation by private efforts and where powerful and well organised minorities have taken possession of every cent of reclaimable land by legitimised encroachment, the role of planning in the sphere of agriculture will in effect be marginal for the total community.

Similarly in the wanton ecological destruction that is being encouraged in the state by political prodigals, resource planning is likely to be unrealistic and uncertain. Whether a country is capitalist or socialist, unless planning is adopted as part of the administrative culture and the bureaucrats are trained to overcome their mental resistance and rely on it as the basic strategy and blue print for development, its utility will remain to be exploited.

FOUR

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIAL RESPONSES

Travancore was one of the most well governed states and its revenue administration had forged a simple and direct relation with the people. Between 1800 and 1808 Velu Thampi, a ruthless and fiendish dalawa (chief officer of the state) made its taxation policy highly arbitrary and oppressive especially to the lower classes including the Christians for his despotic extravagance and autocratic ambitions. However, with his dastardly end after a vain revolt against the British for furthering his personal ends, the sovereign rights of Travancore was reduced to a limited and controlled autonomy, and under the British pressure the entire administration was modernised to suit a civilised society. The old territorial administration dispensing justice from the mandapathumvatukal (temple premises or the outer threshold) by the karyakar (taluk officer) had come to an end and the entire territory of the state was divided into thirty taluks grouped into three divisions which later on were named districts.

Cochin was taunted, trodden and terrorised by a tyrant, a contemporary of Velu Thampi, hailed by his bonded admirers as Saktan Raja (mighty king) who riven by his capricious fury, indulged in maiming, blinding, killing, looting, plundering and pillaging his own hapless subjects. He was a law unto himself and his sadistic vagaries were *obiter dicta* to enforce that law.

He administered his small state from kovilakathumvatukkal, (from the entrance of the godly abode) and after his demise, the British intervened and brought into being a territorial order providing for six taluks. The district administration in Cochin was in fact nothing more than taluk adminis-

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tration under the supervision of two revenue officers directly responsible to a chief revenue officer.

In Travancore on the other hand, each district was placed under a peishkar equivalent to the collector in the British provinces and the head of the taluk was a tahsildar. Between the peishkar and tahsildar was the assistant peishkar as the immediate superior of the tahsildar and subordinate of the peishkar. The entire revenue administration was under the overall leadership of the diwan peishkar who once like the resident commissioner of the erstwhile Mysore, had a higher *de facto* status than the chief secretary of the state.

The dewan peishkar vanished with the formation of the revenue board but the peishkar and the assistant peishkar were redesignated as the collector and sub-collector respectively. The land revenue system now in vogue in Kerala was the one prevalent in Travancore whose benevolent rulers' principal consideration in evolving it, was the welfare of their subjects. Unlike in other native states arbitrary dispossession was few and far between and the peishkar had no substantial powers to intervene with the free-holders except as expressly stipulated.

There were five categories of land, the puramvaka (privately owned) the pandaramvaka or kandukrishi (belonging to the ruler) the edavaka (retained by the surrendered princely families) the devaswomvaka (belonging to the temples) and the brahmaswamvaka (belonging to the notable Brahmins). The pandaramvaka had its expansion through confiscation and expropriation in Travancore during the reign of Marthanda Varma and the dalawaship of Velu Thampi and in Cochin, the rulership of Saktan Raja.

Between 1806-1818 Col. J. Monroe (Munro) who was resident-cum-dewan of Travancore and Cochin deprived 378 temples in Travancore and 178 temples in Cochin of the land in their possession (devaswom land) and added to the pandaramvaka in return for a grant for their maintenance and upkeep.

In about 50 years, the actual position of all categories of land had undergone changes and a variety of tenancies emerged some of which were governed by such conditions and obliga-

tions outrightly oppressive to the tenants. Gradually the rights of the tenants had been recognised by the authorities and in Travancore as early as 1826 and 1929 royal proclamations were issued to assure a measure of justice to the tenants. The proclamations contained categorical provisions that so far as tenants paid their rent promptly, they could not be evicted at the will of the landlords.

Because of the Brahmin concentrations and predominance, society in Malabar was more fragmented with no less than 27 divisions even among the Ambalavasis, and landlordism was more stringent in its extortion of the tenants than in Travancore and Cochin. With the British taking over Malabar, the landlords (janmis) who were previously entitled only to have a share of the produce, were made the virtual proprietors of the soil and the position of the tenants who hitherto enjoyed full possession and indefeasible cultivable rights as made more vulnerable than before. In 1852, the Madras government commissioned Strange, a judge of the Madras high court to examine the system of tenancy in Malabar and recommend measures for its improvement. As the reforms suggested by the commissioner did not yield the desired results, upon the findings of William Logan, collector of Malabar who was asked to re-examine the tenancy problems in 1881, the Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvements Act 1887 was passed. It was followed by the Malabar Tenancies Act 1930 extending security of tenure to the tenants.

While the collector in Malabar as a district of the regulation province Madras, had wider powers, the peishkar in Travancore could hardly in actual practice prevail upon the life of the people who by the wake of the 20th century had become free-holders. Most part of their possession of the pandaramvaka land also by then was transferred permanently to them and a simple basic tax was introduced in place of the land revenue assessed on a complex system involving the classes of land and the variety of crops raised as in Madras. The extension of the levy of basic tax to Cochin and Malabar reduced the burden of the collector in respect of the revenue collection and also simplified the relation between the revenue administration and the tax payers most of whom are small

holders growing different fruit trees and raising a variety of crops either mixedly or in small blocks which are difficult to be assessed as has been done in Tamil Nadu.

In a highly individualistic and literate society where powerful communal pressure groups are active as in Kerala, the collector cannot aspire to be a "district Mughal" as in Tamil Nadu or in Uttar Pradesh. However, with the state redefining its economic objectives, the collector has become the pivot of all development activities in the district. Kerala has not adopted the three tier system of local democracy as existing in the northern states but has implanted into its soil the two tier pattern with its panchayat samiti and district development council (DDC) from Tamil Nadu demonstrating its lack of political imagination and originality. The collector is the chairman of the DDC which is composed of an assortment of memberships as statutorily conceived. The DDC is responsible for implementing the plan projects and it advises the government on developmental matters.

The members of Parliament and of the state assembly and the presidents of the panchayats belonging to the district are the democratic components of the DDC and the district heads of development departments are its bureaucratic elements. Functioned properly, the DDC could be used as an effective instrument of district level coordination of the collector but it could hardly be an institution of local democracy with its bureaucratic predominance and the superimposition of legislators who have a different task to perform. The collector's chairmanship of the DDC however has not projected his image more than that of the erstwhile peishkar and the administrative tradition of the state which encourages the influential to move to Trivandrum, the state capital to get things done, has hardly relented to accord him a position of finality even in matters which fall within his purview.

Of course, the inadequacy of the DDC as a higher institution of local democracy is obvious in Kerala from its inception and political opinion has been in favour of replacing it with the district council constituted with more functions and wider powers than the zila parishad in other states. Accordingly the necessary law, the District Councils Act 1977 was

passed but the subsequent governments have shown no inclination for its implementation. In a state where there is a gap of 16 years between the first panchayat election*, and the second, it is difficult to prognosticate as to when the political will necessary would be forged to bring the act into force.

All over the country and more so in Kerala, democratic decentralisation suffered due to manifold reasons. The politicians at the state and central levels fear that their hold over their constituencies will be loosened or their position undermined if a new breed of leaders as a result of the introduction of local democracy get themselves established at the district level. The departments themselves are reluctant to part with their powers and they seek to disprove the utility of the local bodies. On the whole, the tendency of political leadership is to centralise authority and to intervene directly in administration and Kerala being a small state where ministers are easily accessible to the public, this tendency is more pronounced.

Political leaders at the district level and below appear to be bereft of the intellectual qualities and mental capabilities indispensable for building up democratic consciousness at the grassroots levels and the art and refinements for operating the sophisticated representative system. Caste being essentially local and its polarisation at the village level, the prejudice, tension and conflicts arising out of it seriously impair the healthy functioning of democratic institutions. The spirit of caste is antithetical to the culture of democracy.

Although the peishkar could not be significant to the life of the people, as a levee officer, he was equal or senior to a secretary in the hierarchy of the old Travancore state but the collector normally is of the rank of a deputy secretary who is either an officer of or promoted to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) from the state service. In the Malabar region which was formally a part of the composite state of Madras, because of the compulsion of tradition, the collector still has a better image than in the areas of Travancore and Cochin.

*The first was in 1962 and the second in 1979.

The principle of separation of judiciary from the executive is well accepted in Kerala and the collector has executive magisterial powers in his district. He is not only the coordinator of the district administration but also responsible for law and order in his jurisdiction. The police in the district function under the overall authority of the collector, but of late, the link that is forged between the politicians in power and the lower levels of police coupled with the penchant of the police for self-assertion, has tended to enfeeble his control over the police force. However, the shield of his magisterial authority is often sought by the police for maintaining a semblance of legality for their actions in their self-defence and not seldom made available.

Whether direct communication between the political executive and the lower tiers of the police hierarchy has a measure of democratic significance or should everything be left to a single official to crown himself as the monarch of the district is indeed a debatable question. There cannot be any ambivalence on the point that the democratic corrective of bureaucratic aberration should be with the political authority but the initial action to do justice to the public should be left to the concerned official. Nonetheless, the representative government is bound to degenerate into an oligarchical preserve, if bureaucrats in central positions are allowed to build up their empires isolated from the expression of the popular will, as imperialist impulse would suggest.

Below the district in Kerala is the division which in the northern states is a group of districts under a commissioner. The division in Kerala comprises of a few taluks and is headed by a revenue divisional officer (RDO) if he belongs to the state service or sub-collector, if he is a member of the IAS. The RDO or the sub-collector is also first class executive magistrate but the tahsildar who is his subordinate and who heads a taluk is second class executive magistrate. A member of the Travancore Civil Service (TCS) had to begin with the post of tahsildar but the first appointment of an IAS probationer allotted to the state is as sub-collector in charge of a revenue division which consists of a few taluks.

The territorial unit below the taluk in Travancore was pakuti (a revenue village actually comprising a cluster of

hamlets) which was formed of a number of muris or karas. In Cochin the units corresponding to pakuti and muri were pravarti and kara and in Malabar, asom and desom. The functionary entrusted with the revenue administration of the pakuti or pravarti was the parvatyakar and of the amsom, the adhikari. Administrative reforms aiming at uniformity, placed the revenue village under a village officer, although names such as pakuti, pravarti and amsom are still used in common parlance.

The DDC is the principal implementing agency of development programmes in the district. Every taluk in the district is concurrently made a development block under a block development officer (BDO) who has a team of extension officers. In Kerala respectability to a lower post is sought by its incumbent in sonorous or pompous designation and as a result, the village level worker who was previously known by the name grama sevak (the man in the service of the village) has reemerged as village extension officer though he has progressively vanished from the village and his existence has become practically unknown to the village.

Political permissiveness and administrative ineptitude have combined to make the block an area of invisible investment and imaginary returns with the result of that predatory politicians and unscrupulous BDOs have become privileged children of spontaneous affluence. Hardly there has been an independent study to assess the volume of development in terms of budget allotment. It is also difficult to determine the difference between the resources made available for mobilisation and their actual utilisation. The DDC neither satisfies the requirements of democratic decentralisation at the district level nor has it a structure that measures favourably with developmental dimension.

Unlike in other states the district in Kerala hardly accords local finality to the masses of people. The districts in Kerala are smaller and the state which has a total area of 38,864 sq. kms., has now 14 districts some of which are created not for administrative or public convenience but to satisfy the communal self-centrism or linguistic aspirations or for political advantages of a few notables. The density of population which is as high as 655 per sq. kms., coupled with the highest literacy

percentage (70.42) of course, renders some indirect justification for the constitution of new districts but it has hardly led to the participation of the people in the administration.

There is a single tier democratic decentralisation confined to the panchayat elected for a revenue village. At times, the member elected from a panchayat ward may intervene on behalf of a party or a person in a case with the police or represent an interest in the local body for certain ends.

Individualism in Kerala has induced farmers to cultivate their land with some independence and their reliance on the revenue machinery is largely restricted to eviction of encroachments and entries of mutations. Compared to other states revenue arrears are negligible in Kerala and the revenue machinery itself is not generally harsh to the people.

Most of the farmers are either small or marginal but they intensively cultivate their lands normally by their own means to make out an existence. The development block periodically disseminate information and distribute improved seeds and fertilizers but often the beneficiaries are those who have established close proximity with its officials.

By and large, the people prefer to be free from administrative directions and leadership except perhaps when there is an immediate benefit derived out of them. The political leadership in the state begins with the village and therefore, common people use it as a medium to establish contact with the administration. The collector in Kerala is no doubt the administrative head of the district and due to the particular social and political climate, he has to confine himself to clearly defined spheres where his initiative and authority have specific validity.

In matters of criminal nature, the police station at the headquarters of a taluk is significant to the average citizen and traditionally the sub-inspector in charge of the station is a local force to be reckoned with. As political parties are ubiquitous in the state, misbehaviour and excesses on the part of the police, depending upon the influence of the victims, are directly taken up at the political level or in the legislature and the collector is rarely approached by the people with complaints against the police. Pressures and influences upon the police are largely exercised through its own hierarchical

levels or political channels.

The sufferers of official highhandedness seek the help of social or political leaders, the forthcoming of which is contingent upon a variety of factors. There are Christian majority and Muslim majority districts in Kerala and no collector can ignore the demographic composition of his district in evoking social responses to administrative actions.

PUBLIC UNDERTAKINGS AND SOCIAL CLIMATE

The state has relatively a long experience with business and industrial management and an impressive record of public undertakings. Travancore was the first state in India to nationalise road transport and it had taken to industrialisation in a big way in the thirties and built up a public sector with highest productivity. The state had foreseen the future of chemical fertilisers for a predominantly agricultural country like India and contributed in a substantial measure to the establishment and rapid development of the Fertilisers and Chemicals (Travancore) Limited, (FACT) which forms now one of the units of the Fertiliser Corporation of India.

Some of the industries set up by the state before independence were the Trivandrum Rubber Works, now a heavily losing concern due to irresponsible trade unionism and mismanagement, the Trivandrum Spinning Mills, the Kundara Ceramics, the Travancore Plywood, the Travancore Sugars and Chemicals and the Travancore Titanium, an industry of which the state has monopoly. When Travancore was an autonomous princely state, every enterprise was producing appreciably high profits but with the formation of Kerala and the free flow of socialist and communist ideas envisaging economic egalitarianism, their expending capacity has outweighed their productivity and profitability.

Public undertakings multiply in Kerala as the industrial base built by Travancore is sound enough but their contribution to the evolution of an equal society is fast dwindling. Indulgent political leadership, aggressive trade-unionism, bureaucratic extravagance and rapacity of communal pressure groups have squandered away the profit of even monopolies such as the titanium, on excessive welfarism exclusively directed to the employees, instead of mobilising it to new invest-

ment areas capable of promising higher returns for social reorganisation.

Many public sector undertakings in the state, style as corporations but they are companies incorporated under the Companies Act and their shares are wholly owned by the government. The fields in which such corporations operate are agro-machinery, finance, fishermen's welfare, forest development, land development, small industries development, farming, coconut development, cashew development, bamboo, construction, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes development, civil supplies, electronics development, coir, film development, handicapped persons welfare, fisheries development, small industries and employment, industrial development, industrial products trading, textiles, water transport, tourism development, urban development finance, handloom and trading, warehousing, plantation, shipping and handicrafts development.

The removal of disqualifications of the members of the legislature against holding remunerative positions in corporate bodies and the coalition politics started from the sixties are the principal reasons for the multiplication of registered companies. Chairmanships of state undertakings are largely distributed on party basis.

Apart from companies known by the name corporations, other incorporated bodies include industrial enterprises, ceramics, drugs and pharmaceuticals, electrical and allied engineering, forest industries, refractories, minerals and metals, premo-pipe, rubber works, chemicals, rehabilitation, plantation, scooters, spinning mill, overseas development and employment production, transformers and electricals, traco cables, steel industries, textiles, plywood, automobiles, titanium, financial enterprises, electrical industries and cements.

The state has also shown preference to the board system of administration in several areas. While the role of such governmental agencies as the board of revenue and the planning board, is more or less assessable, the advantages of board type administration primarily in business and industry over the corporate body in the public sector remain to be less than obvious. The environment to take collective decisions by equals, functional autonomy for divisional heads, economy in

financial operations and full scope for independent and objective application of expertise or specialisation—some of the points of merit of the board type administration, are not wanting in any public corporate bodies.

Even otherwise their existence however, has neither won for the boards an organisational distinction nor added to their efficiency. Most of the boards are public undertakings and some are in fact, duly constituted companies. While organisations like the housing board, electricity board, khadi and village industries board, rural development board, toddy workers welfare fund board, livestock development and milk marketing board, (milma) board for prevention and control of water pollution belong to the state, the coir board, cardamom board and rubber board constituted for controlling the products exclusively of the state, are run by the Government of India.

In the early days of independence, swayed by curious impulses of delightful subordination, the political leaders of Kerala, surrendered to the Centre, every interest of the state betraying their ignorance of the states' rights in a federal polity. By and large, boards in the state are constituted by executive orders but a few are incorporated bodies under the Companies Act. Of the various boards, electricity board and planning board are of special significance to the state in view of the subjects with which they deal and their direct relevance to development. If autonomy, collective management for higher efficiency and profitability are the objectives of constituting boards, they are hardly attained in Kerala for which political incompetence is as much responsible as bureaucratic ineptitude. By 1977-80 the milma itself had suffered losses arising out of mismanagement and excessive unionism but the political leadership demonstrated its helplessness by relying upon as usual on a conservative bureaucrat to study its problems and suggest radical measures for its effective operations.

The state has hardly subscribed to the idea of forming public corporations on the basis of special statutes and even the one existing, the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation was created in 1965 in accordance with the direction of the Centre when the state was under President's rule.

As a department the state road transport in the early years

in Travancore was a huge profit-making undertaking but as a public corporation, its recurring heavy losses are compensated from public revenues.

From the inception stage onwards, it has incurred losses which now amounts to approximately Rs. 130 crore. Its running stock consists of 3,200 buses but about 1,110 buses are confined to the workshop. Largely due to militant trade unionism and multiplicity of unions, care and maintenance of the running stock are poor and public relations highly unsatisfactory. Discourtesy, haughtiness and overbearing nature of the operational staff towards passengers are resented individually but collectively tolerated as political parties in the state vie with one another to pamper the "working class" for projecting their progressive or revolutionary image.

Although a corporation, the road transport is still run in practice in the traditional departmental style. There are interventions from every conceivable source and pressures are applied on the management for liberalising recruitment with the result that at present there are 10 employees for each bus.

Unless there is a managerial revolution in the road transport to make its general management creative and dynamic, its maintenance management prompt and effective and its operational staff, revenue conscious and oriented to render courteous service to the clientele, the corporation can hardly be a profit producing organization. The average loss arising from the refusal of the operational staff to pick up passengers *en route* alone amounts to more than rupees three crore a year. And on account of their discourtesy and arrogance, the public who otherwise would have travelled by the road, prefer trains within the state to augment the railway income by rupees eight crore annually.

On the whole, government investments in Kerala tend to be an extension of welfarism in terms of performance of political promises. Hardly a state undertaking supplies either goods or services to the people at the lowest cost or at a price which they can afford. The very object of the state in entering the field of business and industry is to provide society a fair amount of economic satisfaction by protecting it from private exploitation. Modern state aiming at a measure of economic equality should not only engage in efficient production but

also equitable distribution of the produced goods at prices popularly acknowledged as fair and reasonable.

In Kerala the interest of the community is the least taken care of by the public undertakings but the losses arising out of their mismanagement and political preponderance are either sought to be neutralised by increasing the value of their goods or services or set off against public revenues.

In the erstwhile Travancore ruled by the maharaja, the primary object of a public undertaking was to supply its product or to make available its service at a cost lower than the one prevailing in the market but in a democracy wedded to socialist goals, government concerns have become exorbitant in their price schedules.

PERSONNEL AND PRODUCTIVITY

Travancore had constituted a full-fledged public service commission (PSC) as early as 1935 which was reorganised twice thereafter, as necessitated by the formation of Travancore-Cochin and the linguistic state of Kerala. The PSC in Travancore was empowered to recruit from the lowest post of a peon up to such higher posts as the government might decide from time to time. Recruitment to the TCS was done entirely by the diwan himself and the members of the service were in no way behind their counterparts in the Indian Civil Service (ICS) in integrity, efficiency and performance. The service, however, was wound up with Travancore-Cochin taking shape and the reorganised PSC was entrusted with the recruitment of all categories of posts in almost every department except the revenue and the police where, by and large, the higher echelons are filled up by the personnel of the All India Services. From 1956 onwards a limited selection to the cadre of deputy collector is done by the PSC not on a yearly basis but as and when vacancies arise in the government. The deputy collectors recruited thus are eventually absorbed into the IAS normally after a period of nine years.

As favouritism and nepotism were increasingly reflected in the recruitment of police constables, the PSC was entrusted with the task of recruiting them also from 1979-80. The selection of personnel of the public sector and autonomous bodies is done by separate committees over which the PSC has no authority.

As the social situation obtaining is conducive to communal representation in services, the state has made provisions for reservation of jobs for the backward classes who include the Muslims and Latin Christians.

In the past owing to the pressures exerted by the British residents in the state, and governors of the Madras presidency, the Christians were given representation in the administration

but they were forbidden from entering the revenue service which controlled the temples and temple lands, and the palace service of Travancore. It was only when the Ezhavas released their agitational potentials in favour of the Christians, the bar on their recruitment to the revenue service was lifted.

It was perhaps, a tragic irony brought out by Kerala's social snobbery that the first Christian division peishkar and district magistrate who was appointed in response to the strong voice raised in his favour by the Ezhavas, conveniently took the side of the Brahmins in preventing the weaker sections from moving on the public road that passed through the Brahmin locality in Kottayam.

However, the Ezhavas, the Muslims and the Latin Catholic (fisherfolk) Christians demanded reservation of jobs in the government service which was conceded by the Travancore state, after a period of prolonged hesitation, on well founded principles. In all southern states, job reservation in government to unrepresented and under-represented communities hardly invokes any substantial resistance from the socially advanced groups because the leading among such communities are numerically strong, educationally advanced and contribute considerably to the state exchequer by way of taxes.

In the seventies and early eighties, the Nairs opposed the reservation but they were forced to retreat mainly on account of the firm stand taken for it by C.H. Mohammed Koya, the leader of the Muslim League on whose bargaining strength hinged the fate of successive ministries in the state.

The backward classes form approximately 75 per cent of the total population of the state but the reservation given to them is far disproportionate to their strength. There is, however, no ostensible hostility to the reservation made for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in accordance with the norms laid down by the Government of India. However, by a curious social development, the reservation in favour of the scheduled tribes is snatched away by a new social group called tribal Christians by ingenious means against which the state government appears to be reticent and resilient to act.

It is common knowledge that all converts in Kerala to Christianity, from the Ezhavas downward barring the Pulayas and the Parayas who formerly were agrestic slaves, are fused

to form a single community by its institutional mechanisms of social integration.

The Christians who could sink their social past into the new organizational life they have chosen, on their securing all round development, under the pressure of Kerala's social structure, have assumed caste character but when the concessions like reservation of government jobs, were made available to the weaker sections, a segment of them who for long advanced the claim of Brahminic origin, for obvious reasons re-emerged overnight as tribal Christians.

The annals of conversion in Kerala, particularly of the regions of Travancore and Cochin, scarcely witnessed at any time tribal Christians, and neither the erstwhile Government of Travancore nor of Cochin ever recognized such a group. The missionaries in the 19th century put severe pressure upon the administration to obliterate the caste affiliations of the proselytes from the census records as they were convinced that it was necessary to win for the faithful a better social estimation.

After independence the Government of India has however, treated tribes as tribes, notwithstanding their proselytisation in parts of India like the former composite state of Assam for socio-political reasons. In these areas there are heavy and unmixed concentrations of the aborigines and their conversion in no way impairs their solidarity or imposes ban on their free social intercourse. On the contrary, the converted tribals for long have become an integral part of the general body of the Christians in Kerala, virtually turned strangers to the unconverted tribals still clinging on to Hinduism, and have no conceivable identity to represent or speak for tribal interests.

They are far advanced in education and organisation, being equal members of a powerful church which has dominance over the educational system in the state. By an administrative magic, they retrace their tribal origin and take away exclusively for themselves the entire share set apart for the widely scattered Hindu tribals who are bereft of both organisation and leadership. Destitute of Hindu society, the unconverted aborigines in their helplessness created by perverted secularism, find that they have no friends in their predicament

unless they too have the blessings of baptism.

The distinguished anthropologist, P.R.G. Mathur has done yeoman service to the tribals in unmasking some advanced Hindu groups who fraudulently sought to forge a common identity to deprive them of their legitimate due in the government. Nonetheless, neither the scholarship nor the research capability of Mathur can help the hapless Hindu tribals, unless the state government takes decisive steps to restore to them their meagre share now misappropriated under political patronage. The ambivalence of the state administration in implementing the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Alienation and Restoration of Alienated Land) Act 1975 is a clear reminder that no political party in the state has the will and courage to put an end to the deprivation of the tribals.

The appointment of members of the PSC is entirely political but with due regard to the social groups to which they belong. There has been no general public approval of the PSC's objectivity and impartiality in the process of selection. In 1985 a leader of the communist marxist party-led opposition in the legislature, charged on the floor of the House, the members of the PSC with corruption and they had promptly taken tactical cover of the constitutional provision. In a state where teaching posts even in private schools and colleges are given to the highest bidder and where political promiscuity is justified by social morals, the PSC can hardly preserve the ethical value sought for by the leader of the opposition. The PSC at present consists of, apart from its chairman, eight members whose appointments are politically decided on the basis of their communities.

Productivity and Efficiency

The selection to the clerical cadres of the secretariat is done by the PSC. The lower division clerk who thrives on the designation, junior assistant can in course of time hope to become an additional secretary to the government but largely his allegiance now is claimed by his union to divert his aptitude for purposes which have little to do with his career development or professional future. Productivity of the clerical staff of the secretariat, is not more than 45 per cent

and the only job which is done with cent per cent effectivity is the checking of the passes issued to the visitors of the secretariat by sentries who crave for an opportunity to pounce asudden on the entry-seeking public to demonstrate their self-importance in the aggregation of elite bureaucrats.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON ADMINISTRATION

The Centre has ruled the state no less than seven times mainly with the hope of reducing the influence of revolutionary communism and re-establishing the dominance of the Congress. Travancore enjoyed the maximum autonomy and the paramount power hardly intervened in its internal matters. Of course, the Christian missionaries and the British plantation owners were two main pressure groups and in the light of the policy of the maharaja favouring conversion of communities disowned by the Hindu orthodoxy, the former exerted, their influence always in the interest of the proselytes often through the British resident stationed at the state's capital for supervision over the ruler and furthering British interest in the state.

Political leaders of Travancore looked upon the Centre with more awe and reverence than the maharaja during the British rule and they hardly displayed the acumen to differentiate between the position of the state under paramountcy and after the withdrawal of the British. Travancore was a free sovereign state till 1795 when it concluded a near equal treaty with the English East India Company by which the company undertook to protect it against external aggression. However, in 1805 dalawa Velu Thampi with the sole ambition of remaining in power to perpetuate his tyranny bartered away the entire political freedom of Travancore. He was senior comptroller of finances, and appointed dalawa in 1800 only because he could secure the support of Col. Macaulay, the British resident with whom he had made a clandestine deal that he would bring about the pusillanimous maharaja to conclude a treaty as required by the British provided he was given the highest office of the state.

To pave way for the dalawaship, he also got beheaded by

perfidious means two top rank officials whom he thought would pose impediments to his ambition. They were the nephews of Raja Kesava Dasan, the former dewan who was known for his patriotism, integrity and administrative ability but died in mysterious circumstances. The treaty of 1805 which the unwilling maharaja was pressurised by Thampi to enter into had virtually given the British a big hand in the internal affairs of the state.

Tamil by origin, Thampi regarded himself as a superman in an innumerable fragmented society which hardly accorded a respectable place to any group except composed of a number of closely influential families of identical status and leisurely pursuits. The community assumed the name Nair to which he is now claimed, was itself no less than 96 unequal groups despising one another in their competition to climb a rung more of the social ladder. It is the Brahminic branding them as a whole Sudras that had rendered a common base for the evaluation of a group identity for them at a much later time.

Macaulay was tough, astute, courageous and calculative and Thampi was rough, haughty, impulsive, pitiless and conceited. As provided by the treaty, Macaulay sought to play a role in the internal affairs of the state. In Thampi's social policies, Macaulay found an ideal opportunity for mass conversion. As prompted by his prejudice and hatred, he unleashed a ruthless oppression against the lower castes and completely alienated the most numerous community, the Ezhavas from the services of the state and arbitrarily imposed on them several taxes to raise money for his autocratic extravagance. A number of their families who were traditionally warriors were asked to wind up their gymnasiums and military training grounds and confine to the occupations prescribed by him.

The Christian converts in the state were not more than a lakh and were scattered among the Ezhava masses. Macaulay guaranteed sensing the resentful mood of the Ezhavas, full protection to those who embraced Christianity, not only to their life and property but also to their honour. A super egotist, Thampi was wounded by the move of Macaulay to bring within the Christian fold, the Ezhavas and the numerous

castes below them, not because he was opposed to their migration to an alien faith but they would thereby cease to be the source of his arbitrary and high handed taxation and the subject of his brutal exploitation. It was due to the safeguards extended by Macaulay that foremost Ezhava martial families like the Mallitti Panickers of Mavelikara embraced Christianity and assumed the leadership of the Christian community.

Macaulay was firmly committed to the cause of Christianity and he encouraged conversion to all Christian denominations fostering strong sense of brotherhood among them and uniting them under the flag of the British. Churches were built all throughout the state mainly at the expense of the Travancore government, and when a church was to be raised in Myladi mainly for reclaiming the tribals, Thampi issued an abrupt injunction against it. Thampi would not have raised any objection against proselytisation, had not Macaulay stood in his way to deal with the converts in the same manner as he dealt with the castes from which they emerged.

The man who mortgaged the political freedom of the state to become the dalawa, entered into a conspiracy to assassinate Macaulay in order to give expression to his will unrestrained. While running from place to place like a fugative, Thampi called upon the people from Kundara who did not include the Ezhavas, the Christians, the Muslims and the oppressed strata of Hindu society, to take up arms against the British as they would otherwise, seek comfort with the Brahmin women which was the highest motivating point.

A few hundred people fearing his reactions responded to his call and they marched to the battle field with shotguns, swords, spears, sticks and choppers. They were easily put to flight by the well-disciplined and well-equipped British troops who stayed on there to dictate a treaty in 1809 by which Travancore, had forfeited its sovereignty, political equality with the British and right to maintain armed forces except under the direct control of the British. Thus the failure of the desperate course of a short-sighted adventurer to perpetuate his despotism ultimately ended in the loss of political independence of the state.

As the British withdrawn from the sub-continent, naturally

Travancore had returned to *status quo ante* and the dewan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer expressed in favour of its continuance as an independent state. The maharaja who had taken great and momentous decisions such as the abolition of untouchability and capital punishment, consented to the circulation of a draft constitution envisaging a presidential pattern of polity for Travancore. In the political antagonism fomented in the state both from inside and outside which made rationality the first casualty, the atmosphere necessary for an impassioned approach to the constitution could not be found. The majority of the Christians supported the INC solely because they nurtured animus against the dewan, and the Nairs who were the principal beneficiaries of the rule of the maharaja, did not raise a word in support of him.

The fertile imagination of the political leaders of the state led them to entertain the scintillating but illusory picture of a divine India in which they would be enshrined as demigods. Hardly they understood the nature of politics, the pejorative forces that it conceals, the relation between power and a parliamentary majority, the rights of the state in a federal structure, the capacity of the voting system to outweigh the followers they managed, the division of powers between the Centre and the states, the composition of a parliamentary majority, the distribution of powers within the three wings of the government to strike a balance and above all, the impact of the social system over the political system. They visualised every man in the north as measuring up with Gandhi and Nehru whose complex personalities and hidden motivations and ability for subtle manoeuvres, they had little knowledge of.

Every foreign rule dexterously kept alive the indigenous political psyche ideally suited to the maintenance of a political system providing for an imperial supremo exercising control over a number of subordinate monarchs owing allegiance to him. Both the Mughals and the British exploited the psyche to their maximum advantage. The Kerala political leaders could not but have a part of the same psyche and state without being controlled by a supreme centre was beyond their conception. For a decade after independence, the Kerala leaders had mistaken the interests of the state for the

directions of the Centre and the integration of Travancore itself was done on the basis of formulas evolved by the bureaucrats at the Centre which caused heavy and all round losses to the state.

The Centre dealt with the state in an authoritarian style, as a second paramount power, and even its petty bureaucrats did not fail to dictate terms as to how the state government should conduct itself. The result was that even the building constructed for housing the law college was appropriated by the Centre as its own, just because the state had permitted to run the office of the accountant general there purely on temporary basis as a make-shift arrangement. The process of accession of the state seems to justify the inter-change of the word annexation for integration.

The fear of the Centre's authority and its misuse is only augmented in every bureaucrat and every politician with the integration of Cochin with Travancore and the formation of linguistic Kerala. In 1954 when the Govinda Menon ministry was unseated by a Nair clique controlled by Mannathu Padmanabhan, the state legislature was dissolved instead of keeping it in suspended animation with the result that Travancore-Cochin could not express its own views on states reorganisation nor could the legislators from Malabar severed from Madras, who were voted for a five-year term, take their seats in an alternate legislature. To make this political high handedness unquestionable, article 3 of the Constitution was suspended by a Presidential fiat and the rice bowl and a most fertile taluk of Travancore were handed over to Madras (Tamil Nadu) as demanded by its assembly.

In 1959 the Congress after fomenting a rabid communal agitation in the state, got dismissed the communist ministry presided over by E.M.S. Namboodiripad in spite of its definite majority in the legislature. The successive adviser's administration in the guise of Presidential rule tended to induct more bureaucratisation and rigidity in the government.

The Malayalees have an incorrigible tendency to adore the mediocrity from outside as they discourage and despise the geniuses of their own land. The communal situation obtaining in the state is highly conducive to this abject contradiction. While the state earns for the nation about 22 per cent of

its foreign exchange, there has been little central investment in Kerala, and even for the establishment of a district railway headquarters at Trivandrum as late as 1979, the state had given away free of costs, its guest houses and several acres of precious land located in the heart of the capital. In no other federal system, the federating units are asked to surrender their assets to be the victims of legitimised expropriation in favour of the extension of the normal activities of the Centre.

The Constitution of India is so framed that the Centre has every authority to bring an erring state to instant submission but the states neither individually nor collectively have a remedy against the unconstitutional action of the Centre. In every formation and every dismissal or dissolution of the ministry in the state, the ruling party at the Centre had a hand and it freely interfered with the internal politics to make communalism in the state virulent and tragic. It is by propitiating the evil of communalism at the expense of the state that almost every chief minister beginning with that of the second communist ministry remained in power and no chief minister until now had the courage or self-confidence to discharge his sacred and most important duty to speak to the Centre on equal terms to safeguard the vital interests of the state. In a national polity completely dominated by a majority hailing from the Hindu heart-land, Kerala is neither given its significance nor has shown the collective strength to fight common issues as Tamil Nadu.

A capable chief minister of the state, the late R. Sankar had the personality to establish an equation with the Centre but he was deliberately made controversial and denied the political strength by communal fanatics forging an unholy alliance against him. As chief minister, twice, Namboodiripad did entertain strong views about the status of the state, and also its rights but in doing so, his concern was more for his party than for the state. In Kerala, where no single party can secure a stable majority and which for a long time will have to be governed by coalitions on account of the rampant communalism, the extra-constitutional authority of the Centre tends to take the form of an indigenous paramountcy.

After R. Sankar there have been only two chief ministers

belonging to the Congress ruling at the Centre, A. K. Antony and K. Karunakaran and they could not afford to give more elbow-room for the paramountcy as they had the difficult job of maintaining the delicate balance of their coalitions.

Buddhism in the state has left a strong social rationality which could not altogether be obliterated by a millennium of Brahminism that has penetrated so deeply into the soil of Kerala as to create deep psychic a chasm between one social group and another. Before the creation of the three territorial entities, Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, Kerala subscribed to a system of political order comprising a large number of tiny domains, each styling in practice as a state but without written laws or formal government and relying mostly on social customs and norms for administering justice. Some were constituted of not more than a few villages and some, small estates. They had appeared and disappeared and taken new shapes and forms assuming new names and their average life was not more than a 100 years.

During the Buddhistic times extending from 1st century BC to 8th century AD, the territorial formations were governed by popular councils but with the triumph of the caste system their place was taken over by petty autocrats. With the rise of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, caste rigidified itself to alienate the overwhelming majority of the people from the administration. In Travancore neither people's participation nor redress of the grievances of the masses was considered to be important until modern liberal education started advancing in the state. The first English school in the state was established in 1834 and its examination system of education was reorganised in 1866. The social awakening caused by education was primarily responsible for setting at work the process of participation and of ventilating the grievances of the people. The first legislative council of the state had come into being in 1888 which to some measure ensured the elitist participation in the government.

In fact, the Government of Travancore as also of Cochin was nothing more than the closed preserve of chosen Tamil Brahmins, and the Nairs were mostly in the lower rungs of the administrative ladder, in police and in the state infantry. The Christians in spite of the liberal patronage of the British,

could not aspire to get higher position in the government and the doors of the revenue department which also controlled the Travancore temples (devaswoms) were closed on them. Because of the opposition of the Hindu orthodoxy, the Ezhavas could not as a matter of right seek admission in the state owned schools and colleges or jobs in the government. The educational institutions run by the western Christian missionaries warmly welcomed them for it was from them the largest number of converts to Christianity could be found.

The Ezhavas resisted caste and the British missionaries who were the messengers of a casteless civilisation, branded it artificial, inhuman, unethical and antithetical to the unifying doctrine of Christianity. The Ezhava converts sought to renounce caste and the Christian missionaries from the very beginning of their activities completely provided the cover to do so. As scholars of eminence having deep insight into society, they had even built up myths and woven legends into the history of the state to defend the dignity of the converts and secure for them a position in the caste-ridden society to maintain their self-respect.

An intelligent, industrious community with a great cultural past enfolding medical skill and martial acumen, the Ezhavas contributed to Christianity the social components capable of remarkable development under the organisational set-up evolved by its western propagators. It is the Ezhava opposition to caste that enabled the faith of Jesus to weld smoothly the various other communities suppressed by the Hindu sacerdotalism to form a single Christian social front in Kerala. Equally significant is the fact that it is the unconverted Ezhavas who were the first to support the social claims of the Christians and to extend them a measure of respectability when the proselytes were ridiculed by the caste-Hindus as the chattel against rice gruel (poor feed).

In Malabar on the other hand, conversion was minimum and the British allowed all subjects to move freely through public highways, to seek avenues of employment in the government and avail education from any institutions. In the Malabar region therefore no movement or agitation was necessary to participate in the administrative process through the opportunities of employment.

While the Christians had the British on their side to induct them into the lower levels of administration, the Ezhavas had none except at very late stage, their own leaders. On January 1, 1891 a representation was made to the maharaja which has come to be known as the "Malayalee Memorial" by the Nairs, the Christians and the Ezhavas pointing out that his government was dominated by the Brahmins especially from Tamil Nadu and his own subjects were relegated to the background in the matter of public appointments, and urging him to recruit Malayalees to all positions in the government. For centuries, the Nairs constituted the service class for the Nam-pootiris and Tamil Brahmins and they were piously respectful to the Tamil Brahmins whom they invariably addressed as 'Swamis' (spiritual and temporal lords). It was the English educated Nairs in contact with the anti-Brahmin forces in Madras who understood that the social system which they passionately defended, was in fact a biggest fraud practised on them. Although the Malayalee Memorial gave vent to the feelings of all Travancore Malayalees on the question of Brahmin domination of the administration, its beneficiaries ultimately turned to be the Nairs as the maharaja conceded only their claim to government jobs.

Dr. P. Palpu, one of the principal signatories of the Malayalee Memorial therefore submitted on September 3, 1896 (May 13, 1895), another mass representation signed by 13,176 prominent Ezhavas exclusively on behalf of their community, entreating the maharaja to lift the bar on their admission to government educational institutions and services of the state. Known as the Ezhava Memorial, it was written in the most humble tone and tenor indicating the helplessness of the community in a state of disorganisation and the fear of the probable reactions of the authorities in case of they were displeased. A resourceful and resolute leader, Dr. Palpu could not find a better strategy than the memorial to evoke compassion in the authorities because he was convinced that he badly needed time and resources to prepare his community which was both dormant and disunited then. The history of the Ezhavas is an averment that the absence of vigilance against the incursion of social inequality and the failure to forge unity necessary to make political self-assertion, will be

an invitation to disaster for a social group culturally advanced and capable of governing itself.

Although some forms of group identities existed during the Chera regime, there was no caste system in Kerala. After the decline of the Chera dynasty as the land was splintered into a number of minor political entities or political estates under local Malayalee chieftains who were mesmerised by the Brahminic suggestion of Kshatriyahood, caste found its way into Kerala. In a structured hierarchy as caste, only a chosen few could be accommodated at the higher echelons and the vast majority who refused to be Sudras and declined to be apostates were branded as Ezhavas, and pushed below the fourth varna. They could not, however, organise on all-Kerala basis as they were divided by the different political entities and their localised existence though given them varying status, on the whole accounted for their dispersion and consequent demoralisation.

The emergence of three larger territorial units, Travancore and Cochin as two princely states and Malabar under the control of the British enabled the Ezhavas to realise their strength and unite on the basis of their common experience to fight for a minimum measure of social justice. In Malabar the British extended equal opportunity for entry into the government service and therefore the Ezhavas came to occupy higher positions in the administration of the erstwhile Madras presidency. However, they like the rest of their community in Cochin and Travancore had to struggle for freedom of worship in the Hindu shrines and temples.

As early as the dawn of this century, the Ezhavas raised their voice to establish their religious rights to enter the temples many of which were once belonged to them or under their joint management. In November 1917, C. Krishnan (1869-1938) the editor of *Mitawadi* (Moderate) and an eminent litterateur and a leading journalist in the defiance of the order of the Malabar collector walked through the prohibited outer precincts, outside the curtain wall of the Tali Temple of Calicut. In Travancore, T.K. Madhavan (1886-1930) the editor of *Desabhimani* (Patriot) with the full support of Mahatma Gandhi launched a passive resistance struggle at

Vaikom* (1924-25) which assumed a national dimension to achieve historic importance.

The Travancore administration was divided in its opinion as to how it should deal with the mass movement which posed the biggest challenge to the Hindu orthodoxy. The foremost among those appreciated the nobility and reason implied in the resisters' cause was W.H. Pitt, the British commissioner of police of the state. A humanist of rare quality, he was a policeman of outstanding order. He was convinced that the agitators were demanding only the minimum social freedom which no component of a civilised society could deny.

He treated the leaders of the movement with sympathy and regard and personally looked into their comforts when they were imprisoned. He entered into lengthy correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi arguing the case of the administration but harmonising it with the ideals of the passive resisters. During a period when there was no preventive incarceration his task was to bring the defiers of law before the courts in compliance with the law and procedure which was no easy task.

No other police officer at any time during the British period of Indian history, had the social vision and understanding of the sufferings of the masses of India as he had. He privately resented the repression of the satyagrahis resorted to by the goons and hoodlums of the caste-Hindus and he repented over his helplessness to stop it, as violence over them had been sanctioned by the Hindu social system which the maharaja was resigned to protect.

A great pacifist, a profound humanist, a staunch crusader for equality, a brilliant orator, Madhavan was the undaunted champion of temple entry. While he educated and inspired the lower strata of society, he roused the conscience of the Hindu orthodoxy by his convincing logic, captivating humour, characteristic commiseration and consummate skill for converting his opponents into cooperating friends. His prophetic vision of eradication of untouchability became real on November 12, 1936 when the maharaja by a royal proclamation had thrown open the temples of Travancore for all Hindus irres-

*See Annexure 2.

pective of their castes.

The temples were under the control of the state and they in turn controlled the administration alienating the majority and extending privileges to a few. The temple entry proclamation was therefore a unique and significant reform that had demolished the hindrances in the way of its participation in all branches of the government.

Between 1932-36 the Ezhavas, the Muslims and the Christians jointly launched a movement called the Nivartana Prasthanam (redress or absention movement) to secure representation in the legislature and in the government in proportion to their population. In other words, the movement was for both a representative political system and a representative bureaucracy. The movement has released such forces that finally the state has adopted a policy in favour of reservation of seats in the legislature and jobs in the government for the unrepresented communities. The state has expanded its property franchise and appointed a PSC mainly to ensure that their members filled the seats in the legislature and the quota of jobs in the administration reserved for them. Cochin also was forced to follow suit.

However redress to the grievances of the people and prevention of corruption remained largely traditional. In the Travancore state, people who had a measure of contact at the higher levels of administration made it a practice to go to the capital, Trivandrum to get their requirements met or to seek remedies for their complaints. The practice eventually became a custom which to a great extent has substituted the procedure. Corruption has dominated several departments of public transactions like the police, medical, revenue and excise and assumed the form of an institution that the point of propriety for the bribe-giver and the bribe-taker is the performance as promised. Under the monarchical regime service to the average man is hardly considered as a matter of right and illegal gratification to the public functionary is normal expression of esteem.

Independence raised the hope in every individual of a clean and efficient administration and expectations of prompt and adequate services from it. However, the saints and idealists created by the days of the British, came out of their disguise to

satiated their real selves on a logic that serves as a basic inspiration for the new breed of politicians for the manipulation of society. In Kerala, by and large, society adhered to the values enunciated by Buddhism but, an easy-going and influential section of it often found deviations from them conducive for a cozy living.

In a society in which the lower middle class was numerically predominant to refashion the common behavioural pattern and habituated to scan every departure from the basic morals, concealment of corrupt practices was difficult but its reaction was too mild to inhibit them. The demographic distribution of Kerala together with the topography of the state, makes it an open society; yet it is a poignant fact that an artificially cultivated feudal system with its defence mechanisms, provided through the ages adequate room for legitimized corruption which, of course, was resented during the struggle for independence by both eminent public men and politicians.

During the rule of the maharajas of Travancore and Cochin, there were specific provisions in the penal laws to proceed against the corrupt officials but they were scarcely put to use largely because of the passivity or hesitancy or timidity of the people in the then existing political climate, and the erring officials were normally hailed from influential families.

With the introduction of party based government, in accordance with the constitutional development in the country, the British enacted the Public Representative Officers Disqualification Act defining the limits of political authority and for keeping the politicians in power on their behaviour, but it was not made applicable to the princely states of Travancore and Cochin. In Malabar in view of the poor representation given to it in the ministry of the Madras presidency, there was hardly any need of invoking it.

Until the close of the forties, public vigilance both by the press and by the people over the activities of politicians served as an effective check against corruption. In Kerala, a state with the highest literacy in India, which by its nature provides relatively well-educated lower middle class to play a dominant role in every social sphere, intellectual, moral or reformative, it is indeed difficult for anyone to carry on with clandestine deals for long. Habituated to frugality as a virtue and taking

living within the means as respectability, the lower middle class insisted upon integrity on the part of politicians, demanded moderation in the exercise of their authority and prescribed simplicity as a pre-condition for public service and hallmark of political maturity.

Of course, not at any time in the past, Kerala had the distress arising from extreme riches and extreme poverty. The point of contest between the affluent and the indigent was moral and intellectual attainments. Under the watchful eye and fearing the pronounced probing tendency of the lower middle class to which the politicians themselves, by and large, belonged, they had to behave with utmost restraint to retain their popularity unimpaired.

Till recently, the press in Kerala was neither a vested interest nor a big business. With their clearly defined areas of circulation, over 40 newspapers adhering to the same moral code of the lower middle class, competed with one another to unmask any dubious political move and scan any political action. However, the things have changed in recent times. The leading newspapers have become vested interests due to their increasing investments to keep pace with modernisation of their machinery, equipment, aids, and establishment which in the existing situation cannot smoothly be carried out without political patronage.

The inflow of foreign money from the Keralites employed all over the world, particularly in the gulf countries created an unprecedented individualism and race for safe investments. The lower middle class tended to acquire the character of the middle class with different morals which hardly disapproves the craving for the fruits of a high technology-oriented industrial civilisation.

Material acquisition today, therefore, has become the prime factor in the assessment of individual worth. Consequently, the active section of the people have their own preoccupations with their self-interests and become the victims of their own ambivalence or lack of will to take the risk of keeping vigilance over the politicians in authority who are, therefore, more free to go from one green pasture to another. A slight change in the socio-economic structure and attitude of the people has resulted in perceptible laxity in administrative morals.

For nearly forty years, there has been a continuing demand for legislation to check political corruption and ultimately in 1983, the Kerala Public Men (Prevention of Corruption) Act was passed by the state legislature. The act brings within its purview all representative officials including ministers, members of the state legislature and members of the devaswom board and chairman of the Kerala wakf board, and chairmen of the government companies, statutory bodies and government societies.

In accordance with the act, a commission consisting of three members—two sitting or retired judges of the state high court or of the supreme court and one official not below the rank of a secretary to the government, is constituted to hear the allegations of corruption against public men which may be made by any qualified citizen, in the form of a petition before the commission.

The act which should have been a deterrent to the corrupt, however has posed a counter-threat to any intending petitioner as in practice, it restricts his freedom to obtain evidence and he can be proceeded against if he fails to prove his allegations.

The act also seeks to curtail the freedom of the press. While the commission is invested with powers to sanction prosecution of the unsuccessful complainant, it has no powers to award any punishment to a public man found guilty of corrupt practices except to make its recommendations to the government. However, the monstrous or intimidating provision of the act could not entirely interdict the people to move the machinery provided by it to combat corruption. Braving the risks involved, no less than eight petitioners approached the commission within a period of two years to eliminate corruption in public life.

The new government headed by E.K. Nayanar which came to power on March 26, 1988 carried out an amendment to the act in order to give legislative guarantee to the honest complainant that he would not be caught in the trammels of criminal law as a vindictive measure. Nevertheless, there is hardly any indication to suggest that the existence of the commission has helped to curb corruption among the politicians of the state or abated the circumstances that induce

graft. However, the new act has shifted from the judicial authority to the discretion of the political executive, the imposition of penalty on the public men who indulge in corrupt practices.

Corruption in administration is the misuse of public office against an unlawful consideration for private benefit which may or may not be legitimate. In any event, corruption militates against the basic principles of a democratic government, undermines the people's faith in its working and distorts its structure. An easiest and effective means in the hands of influential individuals lacking in moral hygiene for their self-aggrandisement, corruption apart from the disadvantages and even disabilities it creates for the law abiding citizens, makes them victims of helplessness and frustration which break the texture of the social fabric. Corruption is a social malady and its cure is in raising social morals for which politicians thriving on feeding the primary passions of the populace, are averse and unprepared.

In India caste and its loyalty are mainly responsible for shielding the corrupt and hailing their acts of corruption as extraordinary attainments. Caste covers up corruption and raises defence and justifications for it. In Kerala the influence of the dominant Hindu culture has made both the Christians and the Muslims to assume caste features and tempted them to seek position comparable or equivalent to tolerably good levels in the Hindu social scale. Both these communities have often displayed a tendency like the Nairs, to provide protective armours to their political leaders who are accused of corruption or to organise a defence line for them.

The Ezhavas moved by their desire for clean politics and justice for all, for a long time have taken cudgels against their own leaders against whom graft charges were levelled but, soon they have come to realise that their course was suicidal and the vulnerability of their leadership, if they failed to adopt the strategy of the other three communities in combating corruption.

In Kerala the social and political leaderships are more or less one and the same and their indivisibility in a way is responsible for the continuing corruption in the state. Unless the

distance between the communities are narrowed down and they are inspired by common goals and the ideal of common welfare, no law or no institution can ensure clean public life or clear administration of corrupt elements. The social rationality of the state at times asserts itself rising over the suicidism of the social groups to uphold the basic values indispensable for undefiled public life and for the promotion of common interests. Nevertheless, the social dynamics that promotes the efficiency and integrity of the administrative system and the new developments in the administrative sociology of the state will be largely determined by the four communities of the state for many decades to come.

ANNEXURES



ANNEXURE ONE

SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERALA (Philosophical Approach)

As any other social system, caste is the product of an ideology to use an anachronistic term, gradually developed over more than a millennium. According to Prof. F. Max Mueller and Ralph T.H. Griffith, the Purusha Sukta which has found its place first in Rigveda and next in Atharvaveda and to which the justification for the varna is traced, itself is a much later introduction or an interpolation perhaps between a period spread over the 5th and 7th century A.D. Caste and varna are in reality antithetical to each other and the one ventures to make the other untenable and obnoxious.

Caste emerged primarily as a local creation in the ancient land of Aryavarta and it remains essentially local in its nature structure, temperament, behaviour, and hierarchical placements. Except for the artificial identity obtaining for a single social group on the basis of a widely adopted common appellation, no two castes resemble each other.

By the 8th century, caste entered Kerala which was till then predominantly an egalitarian Buddhist society with its various territorial groups working out their own local democracies. With an untouchability and unapproachability which had no parallel anywhere else in the country, caste assumed a ferocious and barbarous form in Kerala and by the 17th century assisted by a favourable topography, it became abject and humiliating to everyone in varying degrees but inhumanly oppressive to the lower rungs of the caste ladder. The experience of Kerala is fully demonstrative of the fact that untouchability is not a means to protect the clean from the unclean or the pure from the profane, but an ingeniously planned social distance scheme essential for galvanising the feudal bureaucracy and regulating the inter-relations in a formal and impersonal hierarchy.

The provocative discrimination of caste and its tyrannical measures were mildly questioned for the first time by the seafaring Muslims and Christians of Arabia, and Europe who established trade-links with Kerala. The representatives of a casteless culture and civilisation, they had sought to befriend the communities which were under the terror of caste and extended protection to those who would be willing to be converted to their religions.

The governing Hindu orthodoxy had no idea of the consequences of mass migration to egalitarian religions and in its unwisdom born out of hatred, it not only encouraged openly the proselytisation of the backward classes but even conceded to the creation of special provisions guaranteeing them human dignity in its treaties with the Arabs, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English. Neither Christianity nor Islam extended much solace to the fragmented, compartmentalised and segregated millions disinterested in the change of their religion. Within the confines of the undefinable Hindu concept, they remained the disorganised and the demoralised prey for superstition, ignorance, illiteracy, indigence, and the ravages of social thralldom.

There were, of course, intellectuals like the undaunted Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker and Paravoor Kesavan Asan belonging to the Ezhava community who raised the banner of revolt against the repressive measures of the caste system. They defiantly made efforts for the removal of social disabilities imposed on the underprivileged and for achieving social equality and opportunity for attaining cultural parity.

Nevertheless, the resistance against the evils of caste had taken an organised form on a rational foundation under the enlightening leadership of Sree Narayana (1854-1928) the loftiest spiritual leader of Kerala. Born in a humble family which cherished noble obligations, Sree Narayana acquired profound knowledge in Malayalam, Tamil and Sanskrit. Through unremitting meditation and concentration in serene detachment, he developed and directed his intellectual urge and spiritual quest for realising the sublime and the transcendent entirely for the alleviation of the sufferings of his fellowmen and to create a new just society in Kerala upon the substructure founded by the identity of the divine spirit and

human soul.

Unlike the saints and seers of the yore, Sree Narayana firmly repudiated the validity of the caste system and used his spiritual authority imbibing vedanta philosophy to initiate peaceful reintegration of society. His inner-self disproving the tendentious religious literature crowded with myths, legends and dragon tales, exhorted the people to discover their inherent oneness and projected to their perception, how the people of Kerala who once belonged a single ethnic stock were brutally fragmented by the caste system deriding reason and insulting the will of the Absolute.

Sree Narayana averred that the social fragmentation of the country was responsible for its political slavery, spiritual confusion and economic chaos—the cause of widespread privation, poverty and misery. For him, social freedom was a prerequisite to political emancipation of the country. He emphasised the unity of mankind, the singularity of God and the invariability of the essence of all religions for a universal society founded on equality and fraternity and free from exploitation and oppression. For the first time after the pristine days of Buddhism, social rationality thus was introduced by him into the splintered Kerala society.

His was a time of dearth of, more a crisis in leadership in Kerala's social front. His inspiring message of social regeneration discovered an eminent social revolutionary in T.K. Madhavan in Travancore, an indomitable reformationist in K. Ayyappan in Cochin and a redoubtable defier of restraints in C. Krishnan in Malabar. All these three were exceptionally brilliant journalists who made yeoman services to the social enlightenment of Kerala.

In a country of castes which does not recognise common leadership, Sree Narayana had the prescience that the advancement of the down-trodden communities, the back-bone of the agricultural economy, was dependent largely on the development of leaders from among themselves. Two such leaders who were groomed as the champions of the depressed by the blessings of Sree Narayana were Kesavan Sastri and Ramachandradas. Another defender of the plebeian populace, Ayyankali for their redemption, adopted faithfully his organisational model, earnestly followed his teachings and eagerly

sought from time to time his advice. In fact, the social climate necessary for Ayyankali's activities was entirely generated by the stirring responses to the call of Sree Narayana and his devoted disciples.

By his spiritual preeminence and charismatic excellence Sree Narayana organised the oppressed to fight the social maladies and malignancies. He was a tower of strength behind the historic Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-1925) the biggest ever campaign organised by T.K. Madhavan for realising the right of the underprivileged to move through the public highways and to offer worship in the government temples which were maintained by the taxes squeezed out of the toiling masses. The unstinted support which Mahatma Gandhi extended to the Vaikom passive resistance was upon fully understanding the intellectual abilities of socially detracted communities.

In the social atmosphere of tolerance he created, Sree Narayana encouraged the weak and the subjugated to imbibe strength through organisation and seek freedom through education. He set the magnificent goal of oneness in divinity, oneness in ethnicity and oneness in human identity. He personally trained and motivated Kumaran Asan, Kerala's Orpheus of universal love and social liberty to use the power of the verse draped splendidly in exquisite and ornate artistry for his mission of social liberation, and two of Asan's marvelously immortal contributions, Chandalabhikshuki (untouchable nun) and Duravastha (miserable plight) have epitomised a powerful philosophy, more efficacious and appealing than the total substance of all collective ideologies for a major social transformation in Kerala.

The social modernisation scheme conceived by Sree Narayana synthesised the supreme virtues adumbrated in Buddhist dialectics and Vedantic epistemology. His majestic simplicity, persuasive logic and humanistic vision had attracted every tier of society to be a co-efficient, cooperator in the task of social modernisation.

He was a prolific writer and his works mostly in Sanskrit and Malayalam raised the ideal image of goodness and goodman over the comparative merit of religions, and conveyed the altruistic and ethically significant message that "what one observes for one's own happiness should necessarily lead to

the happiness of others". A radical social reformer, Sree Narayana with a solemn resolve incessantly worked among the masses for the eradication of crass superstitions and abolition of the abominable and absolutely wasteful social customs and ludicrous rituals.

With the exalted exception of the Buddha, in the galaxy of India's divines, none other than Sree Narayana stood steadfastly for prohibition. The widely known epigrammatic exhortation, "liquour is poision, drink not, give not, and make not it" has a central place in his teachings.

By his cogent philosophy couched in refined diction and self-abnegation to save the suffering multitude, Sree Narayana brought about in Kerala a veritable social revolution by consent. The psychic transformation he effected was so profound that it unearthed and restored the lost social rationality of Kerala which is largely responsible for peace and harmony in Kerala's social life.

ANNEXURE TWO

SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERALA (Organisational Approach)

If Mahatma Gandhi's political personality has its sublime manifestation in Indian independence, his social philosophy seeks its transcendent values in the Vaikom Satyagraha. It stands out in the history of India with a splendid distinction of its own because it was the only mass campaign launched for a social cause under his supreme leadership in his life dedicated to the political emancipation of the country.

Vaikom, the seat of an intransigent Hindu orthodoxy was a taluk as well as its headquarters of the erstwhile princely state of Travancore which now forms a part of the placid and picturesque land of Kerala. When the caste system was introduced into Kerala in the ninth century, it was predominantly an egalitarian Buddhist society successfully running a communitarian democracy. By the sixteenth century however Brahminic Hinduism trounced Buddhism and established a comprehensive feudal order in terms of an intensely and intricately stratified society for the religious perpetuation of inequality.

Except a microscopic minority, everyone in Kerala was practically an untouchable. According to the scale of pollution prescribed, the Kshatriya (the ruling elite) had to keep a distance of three feet, the Ambalavasi (temple worker) six feet, the Nair 13 feet and the Ezhava 18 to 24 feet and the other approximately 175 castes below, 30 to 150 feet from the Nampootiri Brahmin who in fact was the touch-not-able. The struggle for inequality within and between the various social groups was so fierce and the evil of untouchability was so persistent and stubborn that reason was completely lost in a society in which it reigned once supreme.

The temples were the sacred source of authority that prescribed the different distances of pollution and the oracular sanctuaries from which they were enforced as a device of

social control. The lowest caste which could enter the temples for a modest worship with the least privileges, was the Nairs who were then called Malayalee Sudras, but among the overwhelming majority of the Hindus barred entry into those earthly abodes of gods were "the men and women belonging to the Ezhava caste numbering about a million (in Travancore alone) and as cultured and educated as the proudest in the land".

A people built up a unique martial tradition particularly in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Ezhavas were totally disarmed and freely dispossessed during the unabated tyranny of the vainglorious Velu Thampi. Alienated and relegated, they in their resentment and disorganisation resorted to embracing Islam and Christianity in their thousands as the only means to regain the minimum essential social freedom. The Ezhava conversion served as a stimulus to the numerous caste who were supposed to be further down in the social ladder, to seek similarly a new strength and identity in the folds of Islam and Christianity.

Although by the first two decades of this century religious migration had depleted the numerical strength of the Ezhavas by almost 45 per cent, they were still the bulk of the Hindu population to make an oceanic effect in Kerala's social front. Under the spiritual leadership of Sree Narayana, the philosopher saint of Kerala who by his sublime teachings has identified the unity of mankind with the divinity of God and inspired by the mellifluent melodies conveying the message of universal love and moral significance of social liberty, of Kerala's great poet Kumaran Asan, the Ezhavas who stood before the backward sections of the people, surged for a social revolution as a prelude to the political emancipation of the country.

It was when the mighty waves of this mass awakening sweeping Kerala that T.K. Madhavan, a prominent disciple of Sree Narayana or the warrior rishi as John Spiers acclaims him, and the youthful editor of a progressive journal Desabhimani, had his historic interview with the Mahatma on September 24, 1921 at Tirunelveli. Then in his middle thirties Madhavan was instantly attracted to the charismatic personality of Gandhi and Gandhi with his uncanny insight could

immediately perceive in the youngman tremendous resources for a peaceful revolution.

Under the benign directions of his fearless preceptor, Sree Narayana, Madhavan was already crusading relentlessly for the restoration of civil liberties, eradication of untouchability and abjuration of intoxicants. In the teachings of Sree Narayana, liquor is poison and consequently, the craving for alcohol is a main inducement behind moral degradation and psychic abjectness that inevitably lead to social thralldom. The ideals of Madhavan were in perfect accord with the ambitions of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress at its 32nd session in December 1917 at Calcutta presided over by Mrs. Annie Besant already passed a resolution calling upon Hindu society to remove "all the disabilities imposed by custom upon the depressed classes".

An eloquent Madhavan with his characteristic clarity and captivating logic cogently apprised Gandhi of the inhuman and outrageous practice of untouchability followed in Travancore and of the sufferings of the overwhelming majority of the Hindus due to the obstinate and remorseless denial of elementary social rights including the freedom to walk through public highways in front of the temples.

Madhavan's moving plea exuding ethical earnestness and imbued with humanism, transformed the waning traditionalism in Gandhi into resurgent radicalism, and the Mahatma urged the seeker of his support to organise passive resistance against the social evils ravaging the state, adhering to strict non-violence. As Gandhi himself recollected, "I realised his inextinguishable compassion for the weak and the oppressed. To speak the truth, it was indeed this meeting that raised the substructure of the Vaikom struggle."

Madhavan returned to Travancore more composed, more determined and with greater moral strength to continue his war for the social liberation of Kerala. "It was Madhavan, an organiser of consummate skill" avers Mannathu Padmanabhan "who assiduously prepared the ground for and assumed the leadership of the movement for the eradication of untouchability and for temple entry in Kerala".

The historic importance of Gandhi-Madhavan meeting at a critical juncture, is hardly yet analysed by political thinkers

or assessed by sociologists in its full dimension. In the course of their dialogue, Gandhi for the first time was puzzled over the palpable and paradoxical conflict between social liberty, the cause of which evoked his sympathies, and political freedom, for which he had undying passion. The meeting which was not expected to be more than an ideological osmosis surprisingly turned to be a cataclysmic cultural confluence. A man of infinite courage, uncompromising dignity, and unflinching resolution, Madhavan endeared himself to all national leaders of his time by his transparent sincerity, olympian objectivity and regal refinements. His soul-stirring oratory punctuated with sharp wit and sparkling humour, added to his eminence immense mass appeal.

After having an unpleasant meeting with Raghavaiah, the then dewan of Travancore, on the question of temple entry, Madhavan together with Sardar K.M. Panikkar and K.P. Kesava Menon reached Kakinada to attend the 38th session of the Congress held there in December 1923. Madhavan made an impassioned and motivating appeal to the session and secured the support of the stalwarts of the Congress like C. Rajagopalachari, Maulana Mohammed Ali, C.R. Das, and P.C. Roy for his programme of abolition of untouchability, and as Kesava Menon, then the secretary of Kerala Provincial Congress says, "it was due to Mahavan's untiring industry that the Congress could pass the resolution" urging that it should "make strenuous efforts to remove this evil from amidst the Hindu community".

As enjoined by the resolution, the Kerala Pradesh Congress on January 24, 1924 constituted a committee to work for the extinction of untouchability. The members of the committee began touring the state, and on February 24, 1924, it was brought to their notice that the non-caste Hindus were not allowed to use the public highway in front of the main temple at Vaikom. As mammoth protest meetings organised by the committee only provoked the authorities and the orthodoxy to raise barricades on the road, it decided to resort to a satyagraha for which approval was given by Gandhi who was then convalescing in Juhu.

Madhavan had the matchless art of evoking empathic responses even in his bitterest foes and the uncommon ability of

bringing together the leaders of progressive sections of all communities. He was a gifted synthesist of diverging views and opinions and a talented mediator between various extremes. "To the end of his life" observes Sardar Panikkar "he was an advocate of communal harmony and his policy was to work with sympathetic spirits of all communities towards the goal of a better and greater India". As a result, the entire Kerala was awakened and was charged with a new dynamism for a disciplined mass action against the worst form of human discrimination.

The historic Vaikom struggle was launched on March 30, 1924 and lasted for nearly 20 months until November 21-23, 1925. Leaders of every stratum, every community and every religious group voluntarily came forward to participate in it. Most prominent among them were Kuroor Nilakantahn Nambootiripad, K. Kelappan, A.K. Pillai, T.R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, K. Velayudha Menon, George Joseph, K. Krishnan Nambootiripad, Janab Abdul Rehim and Dr. M.E. Naidu. The militant Akalis sympathising with the cause, despatched a contingent of their spirited volunteers who opened in Vaikom a free kitchen which after a period was wound up in deference to the wishes of Gandhi.

The volunteers who heroically courted arrest on the first day of the struggle were three dedicated young men of innate humility and rectitude, Kunjappi, a Pulaya (Harijan) Govinda Panicker, a Nair and Bahuleyan, an Ezhava. As the satyagraha had entered its third day according to its plan, the alarmed and infuriated henchmen of orthodoxy resorted to an intimidation that they would massacre the entire volunteers in their camp. After a thorough review of the situation involving a number of consultations and discussions on April 7, 1924, Madhavan and Kesava Menon defying the prohibitory orders in force, in the true spirit of unselfish leadership, walked through the road but they were intercepted, arrested and produced before the magistrate who sentenced each of them to six months' imprisonment.

It was in this context that the redoubtable E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, the father of rationalist movement in India and C.A. Ayyavumuthu Gounder, then the secretary of the Coimbatore Congress Committee reached Vaikom with a batch

of their zealous followers. In a fiery and well-reasoned speech extending over three hours at Vaikom, Naicker chivalrously championed the cause of the satyagraha. He was served three times with orders to quit Vaikom for violating which he was imprisoned for one month partly at Vaikom and partly at Aroor. Out of jail, Naicker sparing no time rejoined the satyagrahis but he was again taken into custody and had to undergo six months' incarceration. For moving around and peacefully exhorting the people against the malignant observance of untouchability in contravention of the magisterial order, Gounder was thrown behind the bars for one month.

The government and the hatchetmen of the votaries of *status quo*, unleashed a reign of terror not only over Vaikom but the entire agitated coastal belt of the state. Torture of brutal and barbarous form was inflicted on the satyagrahis including smearing shell-lime in their eyes and flogging them in public. Their dead bodies were hung on the spot of the satyagraha testifying to the total cultural depravation and moral indigence of the men in control of a fast degenerating social system.

About seven months after the movement was begun, in November 1924 at the advice of Gandhi and under the immediate command of Mannathu Padmanabhan and the combined overall direction of Madhavan and Kesava Menon, a march from Vaikom to Trivandrum was organised to demonstrate the solidarity of the caste-Hindus with the satyagrahis and to submit a memorandum to the Regent maharani demanding freedom of movement for all communities on the public roads and discontinuance of the heinous practice of untouchability. Almost simultaneously another 'jatha' was taken out from the southern extremity of the state Nagercoil under the leadership of Dr. Perumal Naidu. The two merged with each other and converged on the capital to achieve their declared goal. Never before Kerala witnessed such a sea of humanity surging forward for the cause of human dignity.

Vaikom was epoch-making for the discipline, tolerance, candour, nobility, endurance, patience and determination displayed by the satyagrahis who defying the heavy rains and floods which brought neck deep of water, remained zealously truthful to their objective. Indeed Vaikom demonstrated as

Joan V. Bondurant believes, in no uncertain terms the conquest of the vicious violence by the virtues arising from the strenuous practice of non-violence.

Released from prison, Madhavan and Kuroor Nambootiripad who were members of the subject committee, proceeded to Belgaum to attend the 39th Congress session held there in December 1924 under the presidentship of Gandhi. Madhavan in his lucid and convincing style had given Gandhi a first hand account of the satyagraha that was going on and Gandhi in turn agreed to visit Vaikom. It was at the initiative of Madhvan, the Congress passed the renowned resolution outlining the policy of its social action. "The Congress congratulates" runs the resolution "the satyagrahis...on their non-violence, patience, courage and endurance and hopes that the state of Travancore...will recognise the justice of satyagrahis' claim and grant speedy relief".

On March 9, 1925 the Mahatma reached Vaikom along with his son Ram Das and C. Rajagopalachari. He exposed the perilous contradictions and cruel fallacies in the stand taken by the petrified traditionalists who met him to present their case, with his sharp logic, wider knowledge of Hinduism and profound philosophic insight, and asked them to concede the demand of the satyagrahis. In the course of his stay Gandhi moved from place to place to inform the multitude that eagerly gathered to hear him, of the justness of the satyagraha at Vaikom and also met the Regent maharani who received him with utmost respect and eclectic courtesies. At the scenic spot of Varkala Gandhi visited Kerala's loftiest spiritual leader and the visionary of a universal egalitarian society, Sree Narayana, who offered his moral and material support to the satyagraha including putting at the disposal of the passive resisters his spacious Vellur Matthom.

Prompted by his spiritual serenity and his eyes fixed in harmony with eternity, the Mahatma enquired of the saint: "will my effort for the liberation of the country be successful in my life time?". "Indeed" replied Sree Narayana "but considering its profound significance, to make freedom really meaningful to the vast millions, you may have to take another birth".

On his departure the Mahatma turned to his followers and

said: "I will get Hinduism rid of its corruption; should not allow the campaign to lose its fervour. In my heart nothing but it has a place. I am sure it will be successful in not too distant a future". And before he stepped into the boat awaiting him, Gandhi made a frank confession. "I must own that I have fallen in love with the women of Malabar. I have not seen the women of India, so simple, yet so elegantly dressed as the women of Malabar".

Gandhi's visit had redoubled the morale of the satyagrahis and infused in them a new energy and enthusiasm to rededicate themselves to their objective. As foretold by him, the government finally accepted the demand marking the triumph of the epic struggle. In the list of volunteers convicted for participating in the satyagraha furnished to the state assembly on June 12, 1924, Madhavan's name was at the top. "He was a patriot par excellence" acknowledges Sardar Panikkar "and had no peers in any community". "His personality dominated the entire movement and gave it to a feeling of idealism lifting the ordinary run of political controversies. That achievement alone gives him an honoured place in the ranks not only of Kerala's but India's great men".

A magnetic personality, Madhavan smoothly blended the perennial persuasive power in him with his indomitable revolutionary spirit. Veritably there was in his frail body a dynamo of inexhaustible socio-political energy. His powerful intellect was an incessant arsenal of radical ideas and incisive arguments which had won for him pre-eminence in the annals of Kerala. His superb oratorical skill has kept his gigantic audiences spell-bound and endeared him even to his adversaries.

The Thomas Paine of India, Madhavan after Vaikom directed his exceptional organisational abilities with fortitude and ardour for mobilising the under-privileged to take them to the goal of the right of worship but for the misfortune of the millions, a serious pulmonary infection claimed his life in April 1930 at such a young age as 45. But his effort fully yielded fruits when under the mounting threat of mass conversion of the remaining 32 lakh of Ezhavas to Christianity, the Travancore government had thrown open the temples of the state to all Hindus irrespective of their castes on Novem-

ber 12, 1936.

To Madhavan suffering was the soul of goodness. As a dominant personality in every sense of the term, Madhavan sought to play his role among the submissive multitude of Kerala. His attributes were so extra-ordinary that he eminently epitomised the social India into Vaikom to the sympathising vision of Gandhi that forged in the Mahatma an iron resolve. History paints his portrait not as a towering social revolutionary of Kerala alone but of the entire India. Vaikom magnificently and righteously signifies itself in India's history as the source of social rationality and the glorious battle ground of social liberty.

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